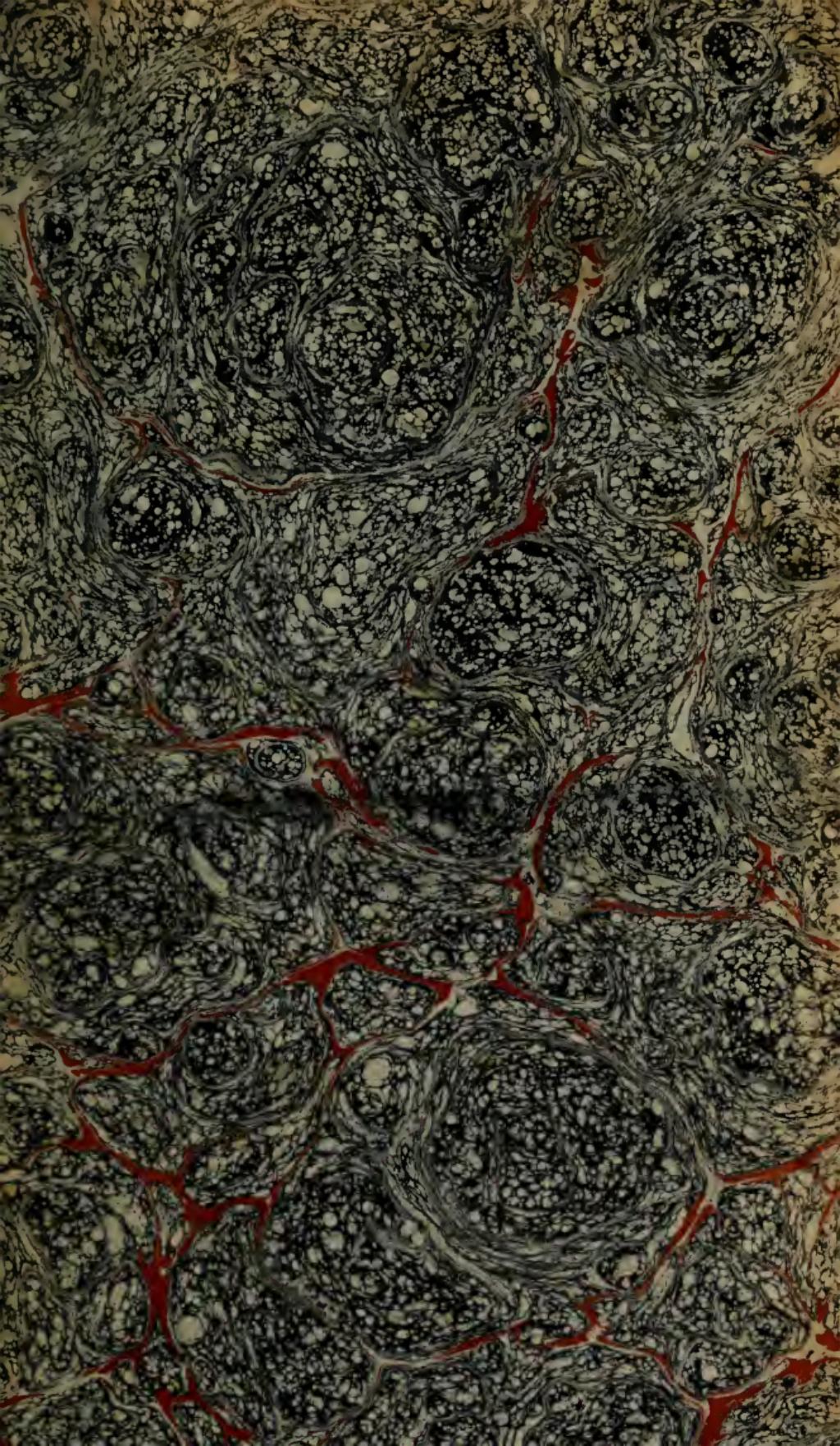






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R. H. Scarff

VARIETIES OF LIFE ;

OR,

CONDUCT AND CONSEQUENCES.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR
OF "SKETCHES OF CHARACTER."

"If I give speeches and conversations, I ought to give them justly; for the *humours* and *characters* of persons cannot be known, unless I repeat what they say, and their *manner* of saying."

RICHARDSON.

VOL. III.

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VARIETIES OF LIFE.

CHAP. I.

DURING George's stay at Brighton he had not been unmindful of the conduct of his brother and Mrs. Bolingbroke. He perceived, with regret, the fruitlessness of every attempt he made to draw his brother from the ruinous pursuits in which he was engaged; but it was less difficult to interrupt the progress of Major Blaggrave's intimacy with Mrs. Bolingbroke, though it required a more strict observance of her conduct than he could always take.

On hearing of a proposed excursion to Lewes, and that Major Blaggrave was to

drive Mrs. Bolingbroke in his curricle, George volunteered to be of the party, which he hoped might tend to discountenance or abate the reports to which this expedition might give rise. On their arrival at Lewes, Mrs. Bolingbroke wished to call on a friend of her's, the lady of an officer of the —— dragoons: they found Mrs. Wharton at home, and after spending half an hour with her, they walked towards the barracks: in their way they met Captain Fairford, who was intimately acquainted with Major Blagrave. Mrs. Bolingbroke had never seen him before, but having learnt that he was the husband of her old friend, Fanny Meredith, she made many inquiries after her. Captain Fairford invited all the party to his lodgings, and immediately walked with them to the house, so that however inconvenient it might be to Mrs. Fairford to receive unexpected visitors, she could not deny herself, and the whole party

ascended a narrow steep staircase to a small drawing-room over a grocer's shop.

In marrying Miss Meredith, Captain Fairford had only thought of having a pretty dashing woman for his wife: he had looked to none of the consequences of an increasing family, and of expensive habits with scanty means of indulging them. All the romantic dreams of love and a cottage vanished, as really alarming bills were brought in. Captain Fairford had no idea of curtailing one article of luxury to which he had been accustomed, and the expensive passion for exhibiting taste in dress, still predominated over his wife. On coming to new quarters, she made a conspicuous figure; was visited, and made returns; and, while unencumbered with a family, the Fairfords had contrived to live genteely on a very con-

fined income; for, though Mr. Meredith was in some degree reconciled to his daughter's marriage, he was unable to afford them much assistance in a pecuniary way. Mrs. Fairford was now the mother of two children, which occasioned a considerable addition to their expences: their previous extravagance had seriously encroached on his fortune, so that their decreasing means could ill support increasing demands. They could not but be sensible that it was absolutely necessary for them to alter their style of living, and a more frugal plan was arranged: they went into less expensive lodgings, and, dismissing their footman, contented themselves with a man from the ranks. Mrs. Fairford also, felt obliged to exchange her maid for a nurse to look after the children: their meals too, were conducted with more attention to frugality, and various contrivances were thought of to reduce their expenditure.

In some minds, the consciousness of acting with prudence and propriety would have diffused a contentment over their new system of economy, which would have sweetened every unpleasant innovation, but, in the present instance, it produced nothing but peevishness and regret. Mrs. Fairford too, had discovered, that though her husband was the life and spirit of a party abroad, at home he could be humoursoine, capricious, and ill-tempered. Though conscious of their limited means, he expected his wife to make amends, by good management for every deficiency, and was so unreasonable as to complain, without giving her credit for the comforts which her own self-denials procured for him.

In this manner proceeded the gay life of an officer's lady, which Miss Meredith had promised herself. The regiment had been lately come to Lewes, and

lodgings being expensive, they were obliged to put up with very indifferent accommodations. The scanty and mean furniture of their sitting-room was oddly contrasted to a variety of shewy, yet rather trumpery nick-knacks with which Mrs. Fairford had thought fit to embellish the room. A bellows *orné* hung on one side the fire, and a spangled hearth-brush on the other: card-racks and hand-screens, glittering with gold paper, adorned the little wooden ledge of the chimney-piece: a few of the best of Mrs. Fairford's drawings were thought worthy of being mounted, and were hung about the room suspended by pink ribbands, rendering more conspicuous the old faded paper, of a garret pattern, the stains on which they very ineffectually concealed.

Mrs. Fairford had given permission to her nurse to go to a fair in the neighbour-

hood, and as her husband was engaged out to dine, she intended devoting herself the whole day to the children.

She was badly dressed, and really looked fatigued and ill.

Excessively vexed at being seen by company, under the present mortifying circumstances, she endeavoured, while the party were making their way up the crooked stair-case, to secrete sundry litters. The remains of the childrens' dinner still graced the table, and, hastily throwing up the window, she took a discomforting glance at herself in the looking-glass, and had just time to regain her seat, when the door opened, and her friend Harriet, elegantly and expensively dressed, all animation and spirits, entered the room, followed by Mrs. Wharton, Major Blagrave, and George Washington.

Mrs. Fairford exerted herself to overcome the confusion she felt assailing her. She expressed great delight at seeing Harriet, and uttered many incoherent apologies about the inconvenience of the house : “ We are but just come here, and lodgings are so scarce, we are obliged for the present to put up with very indifferent ones ; indeed 'tis merely a cottage.”

“ Mrs. Bolingbroke,” said Captain Fairford, “ do you call a first floor over a huckster’s shop, a cottage ?”

“ Well,” said Mrs. Fairford, feebly endeavouring to laugh off her mortified feelings, “ it is nothing better ; and military people must put up with some inconveniences.”

“ Captain Aylmer,” said Fairford, drily, “ puts up wonderfully well with his marine villa ; and he does not seem at all

incommodeed with the grapery and ice-house."

" Well, they can afford it, and it's all very well," said Mrs. Fairford ; " but people with a young family must be a little more economical."

" Sweet little children you have," observed Mrs. Wharton ; " come here, my love."

" Don't touch her," said Captain Fairford, " she's dirty."

" Oh, never mind," returned Mrs. Wharton, drawing towards her the elder child, who repelled her advances with a scream of no very musical nature.

" I won't have any noise, Cecilia," said her father ; " you go out of the room if you cry."

The child retreated to its mother, and while she was engaged in conversation with Mrs. Bolingbroke, found some amusement in peeping under the sopha, which Mrs. Fairford, with apparent indifference, endeavoured to prevent.

“Should you have known my wife, Mrs. Bolingbroke?” inquired Captain Fairford.

“Indeed I’ve seen her look better; but husbands are the most unreasonable beings in the world: you hear frequently from your sister, I suppose,” continued Mrs. Bolingbroke.

“No, not very often; the Ponsonby family live rather retired, so that—(be quiet, Cecilia, my love, don’t do that)—there’s some degree of sameness in their way of life, and of course not much to communicate—(don’t, my dear,)—but they live quite in style.”

“ I have seen the Ponsonbys in town,” said Mrs. Bolingbroke, “ they move in a very high circle, but make no figure.”

“ The Miss Ponsonbys are extremely accomplished, I understand,” said Mrs. Fairford, “ and are very elegant in their manners—don’t, Cecilia, I will *not* have that done—” for Cecilia, having explored the retreat of sundry litters which had been adroitly concealed under the sopha, and selecting a pair of old shoes, held them up to view, and innocently cried, “ Mamma’s shoes!” while Mrs. Fairford, with the baby in her arms, was endeavouring with as much carelessness as possible to make her replace the shoes where she had found them. The child, however, struggled to maintain her prize, and indicated an intention of appealing to the company for support, by a loud squall.

“ You go out, if you make that noise, Cecilia,” said her father, “ do let her have

the shoes, Mrs. Fairford ; any thing to keep her quiet ; it's very extraordinary you won't send those brats out of the room. You'll take some refreshment, I hope, Mrs. Bolingbroke, though my wife has not thought fit to offer you any," continued Captain Fairford, pulling the pink ribbon bell-rope, which immediately quitted its station. Fairford muttered an execration : " this sham bell-rope is the most absurd thing ; such an attempt at finery!"

" Stubbs is gone out, I believe," said Mrs. Fairford ; " I'll send up something—"

Mrs. Bolingbroke begged Mrs. Fairford would not trouble herself, assuring her they had taken refreshment at Mrs. Wharton's. The conversation now became more general, but was soon interrupted by the fretfulness of the baby ; and Cecilia, having tried repeatedly to climb up behind Mrs. Bolingbroke's chair, at

last succeeded so as to get her head above the top, but her foot slipping, she knocked her chin violently, and a tremendous howl was the consequence.

Captain Fairford now insisted on the children's going out of the room: but where were they to go? no one had as yet answered the bell that had been rung for the man; the nurse was gone out, and the woman of the house was busy in her shop. As the children continued to cry, Mrs. Fairford was obliged to take them out herself, whereupon the whole party rose to take leave; it would have appeared absurd to press them to stay: Mrs. Fairford did not attempt it, and quitted the room in a transport of vexation.

After the party was gone, Mrs. Fairford had ample time to ruminate on all that had passed; she looked round the room, and retraced all the mortifications she had endured: the retrospect was, if

possible, more torturing to her feelings than the scene itself: she observed where each of the party had been seated, and what must have more immediately attracted their notice. Mrs. Wharton had occupied a seat in full view of an open cup-board, and might have taken an inventory of her household stores. Major Blaggrave, she discovered, had been compelled to balance himself on a crippled chair; while Mrs. Bolingbroke had sat on one daubed with pudding crumbs, to the serious detriment of a new lilac satin.

Tears started into Mrs. Fairford's eyes, when she recollected the rude speeches her husband had made; but fortunately her thoughts were in some degree diverted from the painful subject, by the attentions which her children required.

The week which George Worthington

had promised Mrs. Rawstorne to stay at Brighton, was now just expired, and though she had contrived that he should join a small music party at Rose Cottage, and Isabella had played off her most alluring graces, George withstood all further attacks: at the end of the week he left his name at the Cottage, and the next day he set out for London.

As he approached town, the recollection of Maria Shirley involuntarily came across his mind, and the genuine simplicity of her manners was forcibly contrasted with the artificial character of Miss Rawstorne: the impressions to Maria's disadvantage had been hastily received, and he censured himself for having attached any impropriety to her conduct on grounds so slight. He now recollected how long he had omitted making any inquiries after her father, and having an invitation to join a shooting party at Sir George

Warre's, he determined on paying Mr. Shirley a visit on his next excursion into Wales. These thoughts occupied his attention till he reached Manchester Square, where he was informed that his Mother and sisters were on a visit for a few days at Lady Estcourt's, at Richmond, and George was considering whether to join them there, or to remain in town till their return, when a visitor was announced to him.

The name of Henry Maitland was still dear to him ; yet the altered person of his early friend, and their long separation, created a reserve which could not be immediately overcome. Henry had suffered much from a severe illness, and more from anxieties which had preyed on his mind. A few letters had passed between them during the first twelvemonth after Henry's quitting England, but the pursuits of fashionable life had encroached

on George's regularity of writing, which his friend had complained of. A subsequent letter from George, endeavouring to exculpate himself, miscarried, and their correspondence from that time ceased.

After various inquiries, natural to their first interview, Henry gave a brief recital of all that had happened to him since they had parted.

Henry had now been several months in England: when he arrived in London, he learnt that George was not then in town, but was shortly expected; he therefore waited his return, before he called at the house; anxious to have an interview with his friend, from which he might in some measure ascertain the reception he should be likely to meet with from his still beloved Ellen.

In the meantime, he one evening accompanied a gentleman, who lodged in the same house with him, to the opera ; and while his eyes were following the graceful attitudes of Angiolini, Mr. Forrester's were employed in taking a survey of the company.

“ Mr. Maitland,” said he, “ pray look at that beautiful creature in the opposite box ; is n’t she lovely ; I must find out her name.”

Henry could have told him ; but his heart beat high ; he thought not of his companion ; his whole attention was absorbed in the object before him : it was Ellen Worthington he saw : she was with her mother, another lady, and two or three gentlemen ; one of them was particularly attentive to Ellen, who was dressed in the first style of fashion ; she appeared in high spirits, and seemed to

receive the attentions offered her with every appearance of satisfaction.

Mr. Forrester was cashier in a respectable banking-house—he was possessed of good personal recommendation, with a decided taste for fashionable life: his connexions were respectable, but he had no other opportunity of mixing in the higher circles than by frequenting places of public amusement: it afforded him no small share of gratification to breathe the same air as people of quality, and he piqued himself on knowing all their names, places of residence, carriages, liveries, &c.

The appearance of Ellen Worthington excited his curiosity, and as he had an extensive bowing acquaintance, he soon met with a person who could satisfy his inquiries.

“ Oh yes”, was the reply, “ she’s a great beauty: ’tis Miss Worthington, and

that is the gentleman she is going to be married to, Mr. Estcourt."

Henry heard all this with feelings of despondency; he felt that he could never aspire to her; why then, he asked himself, should he regret her marriage with one who was probably every way deserving of her; Ellen's appearance too, was so different to her former self, that he feared all her native simplicity of character was lost: he could not suppose she retained any regard for him, and perhaps had entirely forgotten that there was such a being in existence. He now concluded that the high circles in which George Worthington moved, had tended to obliterate their friendship; the coolness and indifference which Henry could not help attributing to him, now appeared accounted for; and he returned from the theatre in a dejected state of mind.

CHAP. II.

SINCE the evening Henry had seen Ellen Worthington at the Opera, all his thoughts had been occupied by circumstances of a very extraordinary nature; circumstances connected with that mysterious night, when, within the walls of the ruined abbey, the groans of an agonized spirit seemed to break upon his ear.

It will be recollected that Henry, though by education and habit alive to superstitious impressions, had boldly sought to investigate the fearful sounds he had

heard, a phantom enveloped in a dark mantle had stood before him, and had disappeared among the ruins:—the groans increased, and directed him to the spot where the mysterious being lay, stretched on the ground. On lifting the mantle, Henry was appalled at the sight that presented itself,—he beheld a human skeleton!—shuddering with horror, he recoiled from the spot, and precipitately quitted the ruin.

His mind was agitated with various conjectures, but recollecting the danger in which his mother lay, he postponed any further inquiry.

The death of Mrs. Maitland and the confession made by her that Henry was not her son, engrossed all his thoughts, and afterwards, when the recollection of the ruin returned to his mind, he was tempted to regard the whole as the phantom of imagination.

An ardent wish to discover his origin prompted him to proceed immediately to Naples, where he had ascertained Mrs. Maitland had resided some years previously to her coming to England: the length of time however that had since elapsed, made it very difficult to find any one who could give him information on the subject of his inquiries. All he could learn was, that about twenty years ago, there had been a person of the name of Mortimer residing at Naples; but what had become of him no one could tell:— the name of Maitland was totally unknown. Henry at length gave up all further inquiry and returned to England, without a hope of being able to trace his family, and he now began to consider what course of life he should pursue.

He was walking one evening in the park musing on his singular situation, when he observed an elderly man atten-

tively regarding him. Henry thought he had seen him before, and after a moment's recollection, he was satisfied it was the same person who had accommodated him with his horse when Henry was hastening to see Mrs. Maitland in her last illness.

The stranger on perceiving that Henry had noticed him, seemed to hesitate whether to make any further advance: he proceeded a few paces through another walk; then looked back and stopt, as if deeply engaged in thought.

Henry who well remembered the observations and inquiries, which the stranger had made in their first interview, determined not to lose this opportunity of questioning him further on a subject of the utmost importance to his happiness. He therefore advanced towards his unknown friend, and offering him his hand, reminded him of his having several years past rendered him an essential service.

“ I remember you well ;” replied the stranger ; “ and the resemblance I then perceived, is now more remarkable : the reason I appeared to avoid you, was to consider what I ought to do ; but come ; let me understand your real name and family, and I may possibly be of still greater service to you.”

The evening was now closing in, and they took two or three turns in the Park, while Henry briefly confided to the stranger, all that he knew of himself. His companion heard him with earnest attention, and said, when he had finished, “ you must come with me.”

The most sanguine expectations of discovering his parents, were now excited in Henry’s breast, and he followed the stranger in silence ; he had a thousand questions to ask, but his companion seemed purposely to avoid satisfying his curiosity.

They had proceeded a long way, before Henry perceived, they were in a part of the town, of which he had not the slightest knowledge: the noise of the busy city became fainter and fainter. They at length passed through a lonely avenue, and came to a very retired place rendered more gloomy by a few old trees which partly concealed a large and ancient mansion which stood nearly detached and was surrounded by a high wall. His conductor stept forwards, and taking a key from his pocket, he unlocked the garden door: they both entered; and the old man having secured the door, they crossed a court, and reached some steps leading to the house.

Henry felt awfully impressed with the solemnity that pervaded this desolate mansion; the stranger bad him enter. All was dark and still: his companion went into a small room, and returned with a

lamp, and going forwards, he made a motion for **Henry** to follow, and they ascended the staircase.

They passed through an anti-room and previously to his opening the door of the inner chamber, the stranger knocked three times, and a voice within cried in a mournful accent, “**Ambrose**, is it you? come in.”

A small taper shed its dim light through a spacious apartment wainscoted with mahogany—and **Henry** perceived a female figure dressed in black seated at the farther end of the room; she rose as he approached, and advanced a few steps forwards.

Ah! what did **Henry** behold! the mysterious being which he had encountered in the ruin! shuddering at the recollection of that awful night, and fearfully awaiting the result of this strange interview, he

regarded the object before him almost as a supernatural being. She fixed her eyes on him for some time with motionless attention, then clasping her hands over her head, with wildness in her looks she exclaimed in a sepulchral tone, “*Mortimer!*”

To Henry’s ear it seemed the echo of his mother’s dying breath, and he stood speechless before her.

Then in a strain of wild declamation she continued, “Ah, what fearful vision’s, this?—do my eyes again behold the murdered Mortimer! Did not I see his whitened bones as the lightening flashed among the ruins. Oh G—d! and am I thus to be for ever persecuted!—or is this no vain illusion, but a real form;—Mortimer’s son;—”

Here she sank exhausted in her seat:

then suddenly starting up, she advanced nearer to **Henry**, and gazing on him with such an air of distraction, that he involuntarily withdrew a few paces from her, when she wildly exclaimed, you shall not go,—speak,—your name?”

“ **Maitland.**”

“ **Maitland!**—then 'tis even so. What, has she disclosed the horrid deed? does the guilty aider of my crimes, live to stand the witness of my iniquity.—Ah, then let heaven hurl its vengeance on my head.”

Her agitation so overpowered her, that **Ambrose** fearful of the consequences that might ensue, requested **Henry** to retire; after endeavouring to soothe the perturbed spirits of his mistress, he returned to **Henry** in the anti-room, and promised to meet him the following evening in the park.

Henry was punctual to the appointment; and he was soon joined by Ambrose who informed him that his mistress had suffered so much from the sudden interview, that she must defer seeing him again, till she was more composed; in the meantime she had commissioned him, to deliver a small packet to Henry, which she desired him to read.

Henry took the paper with trembling hands, and thanking him for his services, he hurried home to explore its contents.

He eagerly tore open the envelope and read as follows:—

At such times as I have felt most equal to this dreadful task, I have noted down the events of my past life, in the hope that this paper may one day meet the eye of an injured being, and prove the means of restoring him to his just rights.

“ I must be brief in my narrative;—the deeds I have to unfold distract my brain,—to dwell on them, would annihilate my senses for ever.”

The narrative was then continued, but in a wild and incoherent manner: the material points of her story have been connected in a more regular form, and the following appears to be the substance of her manuscript, with such additional information as has since transpired.

CHAP. III.

CATHERINE DELVILLE, was the natural daughter of a man of rank in the East Indies. She was sent at an early age to England, for her education, and placed at a school, where with naturally good abilities, she rapidly acquired a variety of accomplishments, but in the attention to these, her morals were neglected, and like poisonous weeds, her depraved passions exterminated every virtuous principle.

She was tall, and her figure though slight was graceful and commanding: her face was strikingly beautiful, if such an epithet may be applied, where not the trace of an amiable expression was discovered; her eyes possessed a brilliant and piercing brightness.

Before she had attained her fifteenth year, the gentleman under whose care she had been placed died, and it was arranged that she was to continue at school, till her father's intentions could be obtained; but in the meantime she took a step which decided her future life.

It had been circulated in the neighbourhood of the school, that Catherine Delville was a rich heiress. This report reached the ears of Mr. Dunbar, a man of profligate character, but of prepossessing appearance. He found little difficulty in introducing himself to Catherine, and in a

short time, prevailed on her to elope with him. They were married in Scotland; and Dunbar returning to London to claim his bride's expected fortune, discovered the folly he had been guilty of; letters too, in the meantime, had reached England, with an account that Catherine's father had died suddenly without a will, and that no part of his property would come to his natural daughter. Enraged at his disappointment he neglected and ill-treated his wife:—their circumstances were embarrassed, and Dunbar was arrested for debt. Catherine deceived and disgusted with her husband, left him without compunction for the *protection* of Captain Raymond, one of her husband's associates, whose success at the gaming table, enabled him to indulge her vanity in boundless extravagance; but this did not last long, his regiment was ordered abroad, and Catherine in her turn found herself deserted.

With an impatient and violent temper, she deigned not to consider what course she ought to pursue, but left her fate to chance, till the handsome sum which Raymond had given her on parting, was all expended : she soon found herself reduced to want, and at length her haughty spirit was driven to seek refuge in an abode of infamy and guilt.

A dangerous illness interrupted her progress in vice ; she slowly recovered, and removed for change of air into the country, but she was now almost destitute of support, having disposed of every valuable she had possessed ; and she would probably have sunk under her sufferings, had it not been for some benevolent people who, hoping to restore her to a just sense of her past errors, relieved her immediate wants, and endeavoured to restore her to health and to shelter her from temptation, till she should be enabled to employ her

talents and the abilities she possessed for her support.

Catherine, however, felt too weak for a long time to be able to use any exertions ; the lessons of virtue too, which had been kindly offered her, had been sown in a barren soil. She made no effort to second the good intentions of her friends ; but with baseness unparalleled, sought to betray the son of her benefactors into marrying her.

Alfred Worthington was a young man of an open and generous temper : superior to all deceit himself, he was not prepared to detect it in others. He was concerned in a mercantile house in London ; but as he was often at his mother's, Catherine had frequent opportunities of seeing him.

In the presence of Mrs. Worthington, she took care to maintain the most scrupu-

pulous regard to decorum ; but at other times, the levity of her character broke through the irksome restraint she had imposed on herself ; with her recovered health, she regained that beauty which had already been so fatal to her, and young Worthington was not proof against the temptation to which he was exposed.

Catherine having as she thought a strong hold on his affections, now began to reflect on their guilty intercourse, intimating that nothing but his making her his wife could restore her peace of mind.

Worthington hesitated : with the word *wife* were associated ideas of so different a nature to those he had formed of Catherine, that he determined to break off his acquaintance with her. His greatest anxiety was to prevent the disclosure of this affair to his mother, to whom he knew it would cause the greatest affliction.

Catherine penetrated his thoughts, and affecting to forget her own miserable condition, she deplored the distress which they should occasion his excellent mother, to whom she was under so many obligations ; she was sure, she said, Mrs. Worthington would enjoin their marriage, as the only reparation he could make.

Catherine now intimated that she was likely soon to become a mother ; she therefore urged their marriage, as an act of justice due to their child. " Reflect, Alfred," said she, " before it is too late : though my despair, or your mother's tears you regard not, spare yourself, I beseech you, the reproaches of your child."

Worthington still persisted in refusing her request.

" Then," cried Catherine, in a wild and hurried tone, " let the child I bear, live to curse its father."

Finding all her arts ineffectual, Catherine at length consented to remove to lodgings, which Alfred had procured for her at a considerable distance from his mother's, and Catherine informed her benefactress that she had found a relation who had desired to see her, and who would provide for her.

A few months afterwards, Catherine gave birth to a son, whom she presented to his father as their injured offspring.— She now again attempted to prevail on Worthington to marry her; but he had lately learnt much of her history, and could he have overcome his former objections, an insurmountable obstacle opposed their union; and he informed her, he had discovered that she was already married.

In vain she endeavoured to vindicate herself, by declaring the marriage invalid. Worthington could not be moved.

Catherine then sullenly acquiesced ; but in secret, she meditated revenge ; and finding an opportunity of purloining from him a considerable sum of money, she had the infant conveyed to Mrs. Worthington's, with a letter informing her whose child it was, and venting the bitterest reproaches on its father.

Catherine repaired to London, where becoming acquainted with the master of a vessel bound to Naples, she quitted the kingdom with him.

The narrative of this abandoned woman is defective in what immediately follows her arrival at Naples, but it appears that her ill-gotten money enabled her to make her way in society with some *eclat*, and her beauty and accomplishments soon gave currency to her introduction.

Among her numerous admirers was Mr. Falkner, an English gentleman of insinuating manners, but of an unprincipled character. She lived with him about two years, and acquiring considerable influence over him, she had the address to prevail on him to marry her.

Their mutual extravagance soon involved them in heavy debts ; and Falkner had tried every expedient to retrieve his affairs, when Mr. Mortimer, his half-brother, arrived at Naples. He was in ill health, and a warm climate being recommended, he had given the preference to Naples, where he could enjoy the society of a brother ; but little did he know the wickedness of that brother's heart : he could not suspect that under the kind reception he met with, there lurked the unnatural hope that he might not recover.

The wicked Catherine too, was no

sooner aware that in case of Mortimer's death, her husband would be the next heir to an ample fortune, than she pondered on the means of rendering succession past a doubt.

Mortimer's health, however, soon shewed symptoms of amendment; and, having received accounts from England of his uncle's serious illness, he resolved to return home. Catherine having intercepted his letters, announcing his intention, the contents of one of them disclosed to her that he had been privately married; that his wife was dead, and that he had an only son.

The atrocious design, however, which she had formed, was by no means abandoned; poison presented itself as a secret and effectual means of accomplishing her purpose. The fear of involving her husband in suspicion, deterred her from

putting her schemes in practice while Mortimer remained at Naples; but she was not the less resolved. She insisted on accompanying him to England under pretence of affording him assistance on his passage, in case of a return of his illness. The vessel, it appears, put into Milford Haven; and Mortimer was proceeding by land, through Wales, when the cruel designs of Catherine were put into execution.

There is very little light thrown on the fate of the unfortunate Mortimer. Catherine's narrative thus speaks of it:—
“ But, oh! what words can I use to mark the horror I feel at the remembrance of that awful hour: my reason wanders; I must pause to collect myself; Henry, your unfortunate father was restored to health, and embarked for England; the vessel put into Milford Haven, and it was determined we should

proceed by land. I had corrupted his servant, and a hired ruffian was in my pay ; we concerted plans for Mortimer's destruction, and accomplished them."

" We came to a wild and desolate part of the country, when, at an appointed signal, the unfortunate Mortimer was murdered. Some old ruins appeared at a little distance ; his body was conveyed thither, and concealed among the deepest recesses."

The next step was to secure Mortimer's child : this was no difficult task. Catherine was in possession of a letter which afforded every information she wanted. She applied for the child, and, shewing a forged authority from its father, the boy was, without hesitation, permitted to accompany her. But Catherine discovered that Mortimer's marriage, and the existence of his son, was

known to a Mrs. Fitzowen, who had been at Naples during Mortimer's residence there: she was now in England, and Catherine with considerable difficulty traced her abode. She found her involved in great distress; and, having sounded her on the object she had in view, she at length prevailed on her to take a part in the scheme of villany, which was to rob an orphan of its just rights.

It was then settled that Mrs. Fitzowen should take charge of the boy, and bring it up as her own son; and that she should live retired under a feigned name.

Mrs. Fitzowen had no objection to change a name which she had disgraced; and, assuming that of Maitland, she sought a retreat in Wales, where she endeavoured, by paying every attention to the child, to compensate in some measure for the fraud that had been practised.

Having accomplished her purpose, Catherine returned secretly to Naples, to communicate her success to her partner in guilt; and she had the satisfaction of finding, on her arrival, that her husband had received letters from England announcing his uncle's death; and as Falkner was now the immediate heir, they lost no time in returning to England.

Falkner succeeded to his uncle's estates, and lived several years as the master of a large fortune; but it could afford him no enjoyment; his conscience was ill at ease: he now regarded Catherine as the artful instigator of the horrid deed, that had put him in possession of his riches. His health declined fast; and at length, sinking under a depression of spirits, he came to London for the best advice, and inhabited an ancient house that had for many years belonged to the family; his

complaints yielded not to medical skill ; and after suffering severe bodily and mental anguish, he gradually wasted away and died.

Catherine's haughty spirit was appalled ; her daring mind shrunk from reflection. She trembled as she beheld the miserable Falkner, struggling in his last moments, and when his dying breath whispered in her ear, his awful apprehensions of the world to come, then her awakened conscience boldly asserted its resisted power.

When Falkner breathed no more, with a wild, and fearful countenance, she gazed on the awful object before her, and sunk into a gloomy fit of despondency.

Ambrose, an old servant of the family, had requested permission to follow his late

master to the grave: Catherine saw him, and touched with his serious and unaffected behavior, she wished to retain him in her service. Her mind became every day more disordered; she now shunned the sight of every human being, and discharging all her servants, she only retained in her service Ambrose and his wife, to whom she promised ample remuneration for their attention to her.

They knew but little of their mistress and seldom saw her; but at times, she spoke so mysteriously as to induce suspicion that she had committed some dreadful crime. Her health was now much impaired: her purse was open to charitable application, and Ambrose and his wife kept their surmises to themselves.

Catherine continued in the house in which Falkner died, and much curiosity

was excited in the neighbourhood at her strange way of living.

The gloomy situation of the house countenanced many strange reports of its being haunted: no one was ever seen to go out or enter but Ambrose and his wife.

Very few persons had ever seen the mistress of the mansion; and those who had, declared, that her wasted form was like a phantom; and that her eyes beamed with such a wild and piercing brightness as scarcely seemed to belong to one of this world.

Thus many years passed away; Catherine's intellects became daily more impaired; yet there was a method in all she did, and her insanity discovered itself more in inconsistent and fanciful pursuits than in a total absence of reason.

She now chose to break through the seclusion she had imposed on herself; she would walk out unattended, and remain absent the greater part of the day.

One evening she found means to elude the watchful eye of Ambrose, and escaped unperceived from the house; she rapidly hurried through the streets till she came to an inn-yard, where a coach was on the point of setting off: it appears, she had previously inquired its destination, and was now come at the appointed time. She got into the carriage, and conducted herself during the journey so as not to betray her state of mind.

After travelling two days, she stopt at an inn, where she passed the night: early the following morning, she left the house unperceived, and, after wandering the whole day in search of an object which was strongly impressed on her

memory, she at length came in sight of some ruins. A thunder-storm, which had been for some time approaching, now began to rage with violence; her mind became more bewildered; she reached the ruin, and, agitated with various reflections, she groaned aloud; a wild despair gave strength to her exhausted frame, and, traversing the intricate avenues of the ruin, she reached a dungeon, which had for years lain concealed, but to which, the mouldering hand of time had now opened a way. She there beheld the appalling remains of the murdered Mortimer. At this moment, a noise of footsteps struck her ear; a wild idea filled her mind, and tearing the mantle, from her shoulders, she threw it over the awful spectacle before her, and escaped unseen from the ruin.

She was found by some villagers, lying on the ground in an exhausted state, and

was conveyed to the house of a benevolent farmer, where every means were used to restore her; but her mind had become so much more confused, that no information could be obtained respecting her residence or friends.

Ambrose alarmed at his mistress's absence made every inquiry to ascertain the direction of her flight: from the singularity of her appearance, he soon learnt that she had left London in the manner before mentioned, and he with little difficulty traced her to the Inn where she had quitted the coach. All he could learn of her here was, that she must have left the place on foot, but which way she went no one could tell. After making diligent inquiry in the immediate neighbourhood without success, Ambrose engaged a horse in order to extend his search, and after a fruitless ride again returned to the Inn.

He was considering what steps he ought next to take, when Henry arrived, and was likely to be detained there for want of horses; Ambrose was interested by his person, and having learnt his distress, kindly accommodated him with his horse.

In the morning Ambrose pursued his inquiries to a greater distance, and at length found the wretched Catherine.

Her reason was just beginning to return and she was soon sensible of the presence of her servant.

The farmer was liberally rewarded for his hospitality, and Catherine was conducted back to her home.

Her mind betrayed more evident symptoms of derangement; in her lucid intervals, she was less scrupulous in what

she said. She talked frequently of Mortimer, lamenting that she could not recal him to life, and sometimes alluded to Mortimer's son.

It was evident that some circumstances connected with the death of Mortimer, had deeply affected her. Ambrose knew not that Mortimer had left a son; but, he ventured one day to observe that he had once seen a youth who had much resembled his late master.

Catherine heard this intelligence with an eagerness that betrayed the deep interest she took in the supposition that it might be Mortimer's son.

Ambrose was then commanded to tell her every parrticular relating to his interview with Henry, and to make immediate inquiries after him.

The result of these inquiries was, that Mrs. Maitland was dead, and that her son was gone abroad ; no more could be learnt ; and there appeared but little prospect of gaining further intelligence, when chance again introduced Henry to his unknown friend, who conducted him to his mistress in the manner before described.

The horror Henry felt at the history of guilt which the narrative unfolded, for a time absorbed his faculties. He knew not what he ought first to do, the whole account was so full of mystery, he was inclined to impute great part of it to the wanderings of a disordered mind ; he determined however to wait the result of another interview with Catherine, before he took any step towards bringing to light

the atrocious deed which this guilty tale disclosed.

Ambrose met him the following evening, and conducted him to the wretched Catherine.

She hid her face as he approached, and holding out a paper to him, said in a voice almost suffocated with agitation, "Here is a surrender of all I possess: it is the only restitution I have now to make: my life is in your power, but I ask it not; to die would be a greater blessing than I deserve: no, no; I must live to think for ever on what I have done, till all my tears are shed, till this tortured frame be dried, parched up and burnt.

Here her reason became more bewildered, and Ambrose begged Henry to leave the room.

Henry spent the night in considering what he ought to do under such extraordinary circumstances. The abandoned Catherine was deserving of every punishment, yet her age and the mental derangement under which she evidently laboured, seemed to plead for some consideration.

From Catherine's narrative it appeared that she was the mother of the late Captain Worthington ; and Henry was doubtful whether he ought not to announce to some of his connexions, that this wretched woman was still in existence ; but as it could answer no good end, and being satisfied that the family could have no wish to be reminded of the disgraceful birth of Captain Worthington, he determined not to mention the subject.

The next morning Henry learnt from Ambrose that his Mistress was not so well.

in health, though her intellects appeared more composed. He made frequent calls at the house, but she still continued too ill to see him.

Catherine daily sank under the anguish of a tortured conscience, and died soon after in the greatest agony of mind.

There were no obstacles to Henry's title to his father's property. He settled an annuity on the faithful Ambrose, and having performed the melancholy duty of attending his father's remains to the grave, he returned to town, and introduced himself to his friend George Worthington.

George listened to the account which Henry gave him with the liveliest interest, and assuring him of his unchanged regard, their friendship was soon re-established.

Among some cards of invitation which had been left during his absence, George found one for that evening to a music party, at a house where he was on a very intimate footing ; and as Catalani was expected to be there, he prevailed on Henry to accompany him. They went late, and on being ushered into the concert room, the first object that met Henry's eyes was Ellen Worthington, reclining on an ottoman, surrounded by a group of fashionable men, among whom he recognized Mr. Estcourt. She appeared, however, not to give to either a decided preference ; and as her eyes wandered in search of admiration, they were not long in discovering that her brother was in the room. George approached her, and Henry mechanically followed. Miss Worthington received her brother with great vivacity and playfulness ; but on his introducing Henry to her notice, she assumed a cold dignity of deportment, that con-

vinced him she retained no portion of that regard, which he once flattered himself she entertained for him. On his being presented to Mrs. Worthington, he was mortified to find, that though he was politely received, he met with none of that warmth he had expected.

For the first two or three days, George Worthington and Henry were inseparable ; the usual routine of amusements, however, soon resuming their attractions, George had no spare time to see his friend ; and Henry, not a little hurt at the reception he had met with from Mrs. Worthington and Ellen, left London in disgust, and went to visit some property he had in the country, where he hoped by agricultural pursuits, to forget the disappointment he had experienced.

CHAP. IV.

MR. BOLINGBROKE had never been thoroughly pleased with Arthur's marrying Miss Villars; and the style of life they led was very much at variance with his ideas of the dignity which it was incumbent on the Bolingbroke family to maintain.

The settlement he had made on their marriage, he had considered amply sufficient for supporting a proper degree of

respectability ; but he had not calculated upon the ruinous consequences of gaming.

Mrs. Bolingbroke too, was not behind her husband in extravagance, and Arthur finding himself involved in debts to a serious amount, was at length compelled to apply to his grandfather for assistance.

This was the first time granted, with an intimation that as Mrs. Worthington and her other children were equally entitled to his regard, Arthur must in future expect no further assistance from him.

Fresh difficulties however arose, and a second demand was made on Mr. Bolingbroke's generosity ; but Arthur had transgressed too far, and his request was denied. He had now no other expedient than to endeavour to retrieve his losses, by the same means that had occasioned them.

The involvements of this fashionable couple became every day more alarming, and having tried every way to extricate themselves from their embarrassments, they found means to encroach on Mrs. Bolingbroke's fortune. This resource at length failed them, and they again found themselves pressed on all sides by clamorous creditors.

Mrs. Bolingbroke's conduct too, at this time, was particularly reprehensible. Her intimacy with Major Blaggrave began to be openly talked of, and at length reached her husband's ears. In the first heat of his passion he sent a challenge to the Major. They exchanged shots, and Arthur received the contents of his adversary's pistol in his heart, and instantly expired.

This fatal event for a time much affected Mrs. Bolingbroke; but by giving

publicity to the cause, the subject was no sooner started, than a variety of other indiscretions were detailed, and Mr. Bolingbroke's family were too well convinced of the just cause of these reports to give her their countenance.

Mrs. Bolingbroke was left in a truly pitiable situation ; deserted by her husband's family, shunned by her acquaintance, and harassed by demands for money, she wrote to an old friend of her father's, and requested his advice.

Mr. Harley came from a considerable distance. He was concerned in a large manufactory in the north of England, and had been always esteemed for the most scrupulous integrity : his disposition was kind and benevolent, though there was a bluntness in his manner, which made him apt to overlook delicacy of feeling.

“ All these fripperies,” said he, looking round the room, “ must be disposed of, and the house given up, and of course your carriage and horses ; in short, every thing that can be turned into money : let me see ; let me see ; it may produce altogether, I should think, about enough to pay your husband’s creditors five shillings in the pound.

Mrs. Bolingbroke was calculating what sum could be thus obtained for her own use, and was not a little dismayed on hearing Mr. Harley’s decree.

“ They will be glad enough to take it, I warrant,” continued he, “ for when they meet with an extravagant young couple, who are bad paymasters, they always charge high to allow for long credit.”

“ But come, my dear Madam, don’t be

cast down : I've been looking into your affairs, and I'm happy to say, I dont find them so bad as I expected : I'm inclined to think you will be able to scrape together about £.140 *per annum* : now, that will be a pretty little income for you."

I hate a pretty little income, thought Mrs. Bolingbroke.

" And with this," continued Mr. Harley, " with care, and a proper attention to economy, you will be able to manage very well."

Mrs. Bolingbroke loathed all ideas of careful management, frugality and economy, and sighed, " Yes, Sir, but can I live in London?"

" In London ! Oh, nobody ever dreamt of your living in London ; no, no ; you

must settle in some cheap part of England." She detested all cheap parts of England!

"I have a plan in my eye, a snug comfortable spot, and a worthy good creature as ever lived for a companion."

Harriet was fretfully impatient, and was ready to protest against the snug little spot in his eye, but suffered him to proceed.

"The more I think of it, the more I am persuaded you will like it—a neat cottage!—does n't your heart dance at the thought?—a pretty little garden!—a genteel small acquaintance in the neighbourhood!—and a nice foot-path to the church!"

Harriet could scarcely restrain her temper, and was ready to exclaim at every

additional recommendation, “ but, I hate a neat cottage with a pretty little garden—I hate your genteel small acquaintance ; I hate your nice foot-paths.”

“ And now my dear Mrs. Bolingbroke, where do you think this happy spot may be ?”

Harriet could not, for her life, tell.

“ At Ashvale.”

Oh what volumes did that name bring into Harriet’s mind : it was the residence of her early youth ; and could she now condescend to return to it, reduced from splendid affluence to comparative poverty !

“ And I think,” continued Mr. Harley you cannot better suit yourself ; for there, you will be known and respected : it will be the wish of all your friends to promote your happiness, and to make you forget in

the charms of society, the heavy affliction you have sustained. The cottage I alluded to," said Mr. Harley, "is well known to you; and the worthy Mrs. Edwards, will, I am sure be delighted to receive as an inmate, the daughter of her highly valued friend and relative: in this pleasing retirement, you may do just what you like,—go out; sit at home; work in your own room, or chat with Mrs. Edwards."

Chat with Mrs. Edwards!—Harriet's heart sickened at the thought.

But however mortifying and annoying the ideas connected with the plan proposed by Mr. Harley were, she did not discover any other more eligible, and in spite of her horror at the prospect before her, she agreed that Mr. Harley should write to Mrs. Edwards on the subject.

This lady was a widow in comfortable circumstances, and having no family, Mr. Harley's proposal gave her much pleasure:

her education and her intercourse with the world having been very confined, her talents were by no means equal to her benevolence; letter writing was of all other things the most irksome to her: it was necessary, however, that she should despatch a speedy reply to Mr. Harley, and with borrowing a line here and there from "the complete Letter Writer," and a frequent reference to her Dictionary, she manufactured the following epistle.

Ashington.

MY DEAR SIR,

It gave me inexpressible concern to hear that Mr. Villars's daughter has been so unfortunate in her marriage; for I heard it was quite a great match for her, and such a good fortune as she had, so that I

did not know but what she was enjoying herself as much as any body, so that when I heard of this melancholy change in her affairs, it quite surprised me, as you may suppose. It serves to convince us all that there is nothing certain in this sublunary world : she no doubt feels the reverse of fortune very acutely ; but I hope and trust that time and change of scene will in due season smooth down all her sorrows ; for one can't all of a sudden make up one's mind to think no more about it. Happy I am sure shall I be to contribute every thing in my power to her comfort.

You must know I have lately left the cottage, and am come into the town, for 'twas gone all out of repair, and my landlord would not do a thing, which I took very ill of him, after I been there so long ; now not so much as put a new sill to the wash-house door, which I'm sure is landlord's repairs, and all the window frames were got very ricketty.

I find my present situation very agreeable, and I have no doubt Mrs. Bolingbroke will find it so too;—pray give my kind love to her, and say how happy I shall be to see her: every thing shall be got ready for her immediately, so the sooner she comes the better.

I am, Dear Sir,

With the greatest respect,

Your sincere friend, and well-wisher,

MARGARET EDWARDS.

As soon as the plan for Mrs. Bolingbroke's removal was arranged, she gave out that she was going to pay a visit to a relation, and then proceeded with Mr. Harley to Ashington.

They found Mrs. Edwards just going to tea: she received Mrs. Bolingbroke with great kindness, thanked Mr. Harley for procuring her so agreeable a companion, and expressed great desire to make her feel comfortable and happy.

For some time the change in Mrs. Bolingbroke's situation, so entirely occupied her mind, as to leave no room for any other consideration. It was natural that she should indulge her griefs in private, and Mrs. Edwards made no attempts to divert her thoughts: she considered, 'twas best to let sorrow have its way; and then 'twould be all over, she said; after a time, however, she began to think Mrs. Bolingbroke might associate a little with some of the neighbours; for many were the enquiries after her; but after making one or two efforts to entice her into company, she gave up the point, and was content to forego

all society herself, rather than distress her guest.

Mrs. Edwards was naturally subject to low spirits, and her employments were not calculated to enliven either herself or her companion. If she read, her favourite books were Pilgrim's Progress, the History of Bampfylde Moore Carew, or some old Magazines. If she worked, the completion of a patchwork counterpane, hemming towels or darning stockings, and sometimes making clothes for the poor, she pursued with laudable perseverance to the accompaniment of a Psalm tune, which imperceptibly glided into an ancient ballad, and back again into the hymn. If she walked, a stroll round the garden or a visit to a neighbour comprised the extent of her rambles.

Her conversation was made up of de-

tached observations, neither remarkable for their novelty nor utility. There were subjects, which, at stated times, she never failed to start. As spring advanced, she introduced the cheerful intelligence by observing “ how nice and long the days were growing, and how pleasant it would be to drink tea by daylight.” At the approach of winter, she would remark, “ how soon the evenings do close in, but there, all seasons have their recommendations, and what’s so comfortable as a social dish of tea round a good fire.”— She was the foreteller of thunder in summer ; and a rheumatic hip was the never-failing sign of change of weather in autumn.

But though Mrs. Edwards was so little gifted with conversational talents, she was studiously attentive to promote Mrs. Bolingbroke’s comfort : she gave up her own bed-chamber to her, and fitted up a

small sitting-room adjoining, on purpose for her accommodation ; and perceiving Mrs. Bolingbroke's appetite very indifferent, she spared neither pains nor expense in procuring such delicacies as she thought might please her. But, notwithstanding all that Mrs. Edwards did, Mrs. Bolingbroke made no effort to appear pleased or contented ; and all Mrs. Edwards could say in reply to the inquiries after her, was, that she was not able to see visitors, "as she took on, so." At length, however, Mrs. Bolingbroke so far overcame her dislike to seeing company, that on hearing that two ladies only, were expected to drink tea with Mrs. Edwards, she condescended to be of the party ; and endured the insipid conversation, characteristic of a little country town, which conspicuously distinguished the trio.

" I'm extremely glad to see you ma'am ;
pray take a seat ; nearer the fire."

“ Ma’am, I’m afraid I have taken your chair.”

“ By no means ma’am. I hope you don’t find any draught from the window,—such stormy weather! the wind’s set this side the house—a deal of rain we’ve had lately.”

“ Were you at Mrs. Kinnersley’s party the other evening, ma’am?”

“ Yes, sure, and a very pleasant evening we had; I thought I should have met *you* there, ma’am.”

“ Old friends you see, ma’am, are sometimes forgotten. Indeed, I must say, I think she gives herself the most disgusting airs since she was left this fortune: I’m sure many’s the service I’ve rendered her; but it seems all forgotten,—but it’s no matter, I shouldn’t have gone, if I

had been asked, for I was otherwise engaged ; but that doesn't alter the case."

"No, sure, ma'am—"

"I must say I think it very unbecoming in her to slight an old acquaintance in the way she does ; should you or I do so, ma'am ? No, I'll be bound to say you wouldn't, if you were ever so much rose."

"It was said," observed Mrs. Baker, "that she was going to take Mr. Walcot's house."

"Ah ! 'twas said so, but Mr. Cannington has bought it."

"So, so, so."

"Why then, that makes my dream out," cried Mrs. Wade : " 'tis amazing how dreams do come true : people may

say what they please, but I shall always think there's something very strange in it."

" Oh, yes, sure, Ma'am ; why, there have been quite learned men that hold in dreams, you know.—I hope your tea is as you like it, Ma'am ?"

" Quite so, Ma'am."

" You like this country, Ma'am ?" said Mrs. Wade, addressing Mrs. Bolingbroke, who scarcely deigned a reply.

" What a strange story there has got abroad, about Miss Whittaker's eloping with Mr. Ellis, Ma'am," said Mrs. Baker ; " 'twas a ridiculous affair ; but I can't say it at all surprised me. She certainly did give him encouragement, but as for her eloping with him that I did not credit ; 'twas odd enough,

to be sure, they should happen both to take it into their heads to leave home together, and none of their friends let know where they were gone, and then happen to meet in the same place ; but, as I say, I am the last person in the world to give ear to such suspicions."

" Surely, Ma'am, surely.—I'm afraid you find an air from the door."

" It did look a little odd, to be sure," resumed Mrs. Baker, " and if Mr. Sam Whittaker hadn't come up in time, and brought her back, there's no saying where it would have ended : but how they came to fancy *I* was the author of the report, I can't imagine. I might perhaps just have said to a friend, in confidence, that such and such reports were going about—that's a different thing ; for my part, I'm for living in peace and quietness, and I make it a rule never to repeat things of that sort ; it's only the way to make mischief,

and I am sure there's enough in the world already, without any body's adding to it. Now, 'twas but yesterday I was calling at Mrs. Kirkpatrick's, the servant told me she was out, so I just stept into the parlour to leave a written message, and while I was writing, why, I heard Mr. and Mrs. Kirkpatrick, in the back parlour, at high words, downright quarrelling ; but I should'nt think of going about telling every body of it, you know, Ma'am."

" No, sure, Ma'am."

Here a pause ensued, which Mrs. Edwards interrupted, by favouring the company with the novel remark, that the weather had been very uncomfortable of late.

" Very much so indeed, Ma'am," returned Mrs. Baker, " and there has been a deal of illness about."

“ Have you heard how poor Mrs. Lawson is ?” inquired Mrs. Wade.

“ No, Ma’am, I haven’t ; indeed, I didn’t hear, till yesterday, that she was ill.”

“ Oh, yes, Ma’am ; she has been very dangerously ill ; she was quite given over at one time.—I hope your tea is to your liking, Ma’am—’twas quite a sudden seizure.”

“ Quite so, Ma’am,” added Mrs. Wade, “ she drank tea with me this day fortnight, and seemed quite hearty ; well, when she got home, she complained of a little chill ; she took something warm and went to bed. That was as it might be on the Friday ; well, in the morning she found herself very unwell indeed—I’ll thank you for a little more sugar, Ma’am —Oh, plenty Ma’am—and Mrs. Varlow

calling in to see her, advised her by all means to send for Mr. Sperrin ; no, says she, she thought she should be better by and by ; she had taken a little James's powder, she said, and she'd see what that would do for her. Well, Ma'am, towards evening she was worse, and Mr. Sperrin was sent for ; and on the Tuesday—no, it must have been on the Monday, because I was observing none of the family were at church, and the next day it was that I heard how bad she was.—What excellent cream your's is, Ma'am ; 'tis quite a treat."

" 'Tis very odd," said Mrs. Baker, I did nothing but dream about her t'other night : my mind seemed to run upon her so. I thought I met her as I was going going down the street ; she looked very odd, and passed me rather rudely as I thought : then I was afterwards got home, and she came in suddenly, and asked me for two shillings : she was going to ride

in a coach, she said, and she wanted two-shillings to give the man. Well, I thought, I couldn't, for the life of me, get out my purse, do what I would ; and before I could give her the money she was gone. Well, then, I thought I was walking by the side of a river, and I saw a coach a-coming over a bridge, and, as it went by, she looked out of the window, but she didn't speak to me ; and then I thought I was in a boat—no ; that must have been before ; for after she went by, I thought there was a great crowd in a meadow, and I couldn't get there, I thought ; and in the morning, when I called to mind my dream, I was thinking, you know, that perhaps another sort of coach must serve her."

" And you had not heard *then* of her illness," said Mrs. Wade, solemnly.

" Oh yes, sure," returned Mrs. Baker,

at once destroying Mrs. Wade's anxiety to establish the prophetic tendency of dreams.

Some further animadversions on their neighbours, interlarded with a repetition of their remarks on the weather, brought the evening to patten and lantern time.

CHAP. V.

MARIA Shirley still continued at Brompton ; she had been for a few weeks as a governess in a lady's family ; but she found the situation by no means agreeable to her. Not having heard from Lady Warre, she had made enquiries herself among Mrs. Brown's acquaintance, and was recommended to Mrs. Cartwright, a lady of respectability, residing in Russel square.

On being introduced, Maria was much pleased with Mrs. Cartwright's affability :

during the short time she continued in the family she invariably received the most gratifying attentions; and had not the situation been in other respects objectionable, Maria would have been perfectly contented. Here she was treated as an equal: she felt that a reciprocal obligation was understood and acknowledged; banishing all idea of dependence, and encouraging that self-respect which is so essential to the enjoyment of society.

Mrs. Cartwright was the only child of Mr. Judkin, a Jamaica planter, who had left England very young in an inferior capacity: by degrees he made a large fortune, and his wife being dead, he sent his daughter to England for her education, under the care of a London merchant. On the death of Mr. Judkin, a few years afterwards, an arrangement was made that his heiress who was now old

enough to leave school should reside with Mrs. Morrison, the merchant's sister.

This lady had a large acquaintance, and frequently visited a Mrs. Cleveland, whose elegant supper parties had the reputation of being extremely instrumental in introducing matrimonial connexions : but as the ladies had always large fortunes, and the gentlemen were generally needy men of fashion, it was shrewdly conjectured that Mrs. Cleveland's services did not go without an adequate remuneration. These surmises, however, were confined to the few : the many, blindly regarded her entertainments as the genuine effusion of a generous and hospitable disposition.

At this time, Mr. Cartwright, a man of some distinction in the fashionable world, had entered his name at Mrs. Cleveland's Intelligence Office for Benedicks ; and

Miss Judkin having made her first appearance at a splendid ball, he was in due form presented to his destined bride, as Mr. Cartwright of Moorfield Hall, Leicestershire, and cousin to Sir Thomas Cartwright, Baronet. The heavy mortgages on Moorfield Hall, and the slender connexion with the Baronet, were judiciously kept out of sight, nor did Miss Judkin concern herself about the matter. Mr. Cartwright possessed a handsome person, ingratiating manners, and fashionable appearance. There were no opposing interests to thwart the arrangement, and on the wedding day Mr. Cartwright paid down to Mrs. Cleveland the stipulated sum for her good offices.

Mr. Cartwright being once more reinstated in affluence, indulged himself in all his accustomed habits: he rose about noon, lounged over his breakfast, and skimmed the Morning Post; dressed for a

ride, shewed himself in all the fashionable places, passed an hour or two at his club in St. James's street, brought home friends to dinner at seven, and never quitted the table till midnight.

Having a tolerably good constitution, he was enabled (barring a few fits of the gout) to pursue this *regular* life for about ten years, when an attack of a more violent nature, carried him off, on the very day that was to have decided a bet, that he would drink three bottles, and ride six miles afterwards without a fall.

His widow, always fond of company, soon discarded her weeds, and again joined her gay circle of friends. Half a dozen children demanded a share of her attention: her eldest son had just entered into the guards; two others were at Eton, and her daughters, who were be-

tween nine and twelve, were now placed under the care of Miss Shirley.

On Maria's arrival in Russel Square, she was shewn into the library, and presently the two eldest girls came laughing into the room.

They had left such an incomparable quiz with their mamma, they said, as was enough to banish grief for a twelvemonth. "Her muff, Theresa! her muff! it must have been an old cat:—and how she croaked! I wonder mamma could keep her countenance. I wish you could see her, Miss Shirley; she sits up, just so; and puts out her hand this way, and that way."

"I'll run and speak to Mamma," cried Theresa, "and leave open the door, and then you can catch a full view of her in the mirror: oh, she deserves a Hogarth's

pencil.—Stop, I hear her on the stairs, now do just take a peep, Miss Shirley, such a thing may never appear again."

Maria shewed no inclination to join in this kind of amusement, while the young ladies were convulsed with laughter as the object of their ridicule passed the library-door.

When their mirth had in some degree subsided, the eldest suddenly said, "Oh, Miss Shirley, we shall not be able to attend to our lessons for two or three days, as it is just fixed that we are to take parts in the Beaux Stratagem at Mrs. Farley's next Monday; and we shall be so busy in preparing ourselves, rehearsing, and choosing our dresses, we shall not have time for any thing else."

Maria was more inclined to regard this information as a joke, than to sup-

pose their mother would permit their time to be so occupied ; she found, however, that Mrs. Cartwright looked forwards to these juvenile theatricals with as much ardour as her daughters ; she did not approve of their lessons being entirely suspended, but so very gentle an enforcement of their studies was urged, that Maria perceived it would be impossible to command their attention at present.

When the play had been performed, Maria hoped that more regularity would be observed, but something constantly occurred to interrupt her plans ; and though Mrs. Cartwright was perfectly contented, and expressed her satisfaction by the most winning marks of attention, Maria could not feel happy in performing so useless a part, and convinced, that it was impossible to do justice to her pupils, while the present system of indul-

gence was tolerated, she ventured to hint her sentiments to Mrs. Cartwright, who expressed herself infinitely obliged for her frankness and good advice, and trusted that her daughters would pay more attention. Still nothing was done; other pursuits interfered; and late hours and trifling employments rendered Maria's endeavours ineffectual.

Mrs. Cartwright was continually having parties at home, and on these occasions her *accomplished* daughters were always called into action, to recite, exhibit attitudes, or perform some fancy dance; and for the entertainment of a select few, they mimicked some of the company that had taken leave: the room rang with rapturous applause, while Maria looked on, oppressed with shame.

About a week after Maria's arrival, Mrs. Cartwright being engaged out to

dinner, the young ladies were set upon the amusement of dressing themselves in their brothers' clothes, and insisted on equipping Maria in Mr. Cartwright's regimentals ; but finding this point unattainable, they applied to Mrs. Nightingale, their mother's woman, who readily entered into the frolic, and created shouts of laughter as she strutted about the room with a martial air. Maria had said every thing to prevent such impropriety, but finding her remonstrances of no avail, she retired to her own room. The next morning she thought it right to make Mrs. Cartwright acquainted with what had passed, but before she could begin the subject, Mrs. Cartwright said with a laugh, " so I find the girls enjoyed themselves famously last night ; I wish I had come home in the middle of your fun, I should have enjoyed seeing Nightingale in William's clothes most

amazingly ; I'm told she performed her part to admiration."

Maria observed, she had not stayed to witness what she so much disapproved.

" Dear ! such children can mean no harm. I think you regard the matter too seriously ; but I'll tell them they must attend to what you say ; though they are such droll creatures, one feels quite unwilling to check their innocent mirth."

Mrs. Cartwright's acquaintance extended through various channels. Her father's connexions lay in the city ; her husband's in the fashionable world ; and the gaiety of her temper welcomed to her house a variety of persons, whose talents contributed to her amusement. Among these, were public singers and theatrical performers. She was extremely

fond of plays, and indulged her daughters in taking them very frequently: when a representation was announced that they particularly wished to see, and other engagements prevented her from accompanying them herself, Maria was requested to attend them, on which occasions an old Mrs. Mackintosh was sent for to act *chaperon*.

A good play well performed, Maria regarded as a very rational amusement; but being little acquainted with the character of plays in general, she was distressed to find some of those to which she took the Miss Cartwrights, were of an exceptionable tendency, and that those parts were particularly attended to, which it would have been desirable should have escaped their notice.

In the meantime, little progress was made in their studies; Maria endeav-

voured, by every means in her power, to render their lessons as little irksome to them as possible; yet it was of no avail; their minds still wandered to their favourite pursuits, and Theresa, in the middle of her Geography, abruptly exclaimed, "Oh, 'twas in Doctor Pother that Mathews said 'Puppy, Puppy.' "

If Maria, when present, could command so little authority, it was not to be supposed that much attention was paid to her directions when out of sight; and at a time when they ought to have been preparing their French exercises, Maria discovered her eldest pupil enacting the kneeling lover, while the youngest repelled his suit with all the airs of a finished coquet.

The kindness Maria experienced from Mrs. Cartwright, for some time deterred her from expressing a wish to leave her;

but at length she saw so much to disapprove, that she could no longer delay making Mrs. Cartwright acquainted with her determination. Maria then called on Lady Warre, to apprise her that she was going to return to Mrs. Brown's, and to request that her ladyship would let her know if she should hear of a situation that might be likely to suit.

CHAP. VI.

MARIA received a hearty welcome from her friends at Brompton, and continued to experience the greatest kindness, though compelled to listen to schemes that extremely annoyed her.

Mrs. Brown had been much disappointed at not having been able to bring about a match between Maria and young Webb; but another person striking her as a suitable husband for her young friend, she began to consider how this affair might be brought about.

The gentleman in question was a widower, without a family; had lately left off business with an independent fortune, and had now taken a house at Brompton.

Mr. and Mrs. Brown and Maria were to meet him at a friend's house, where they were to spend the evening; and Mrs. Brown augured very favorably of the result of this interview: she had heard he was looking out for a second wife, and before they went, she intimated as much to Maria.

Unfortunately for Mrs. Brown's plans, there was a widow of the party, who was thoroughly convinced that there could be no one so proper as herself, to supply the dreary void that Mr. Maybury must feel from the loss of his first wife; she thought it her duty, therefore, to lose no opportunity of recommending herself to the agreeable widower.

Mr. Maybury having, since his wife's death, become rather serious, the widow found it necessary to fall in with his notions; and as the conversation turned on charity, she stood up warmly for the necessity of this most important branch of religious duty, taking care to throw in a few side compliments to the benevolent disposition of Mr. Maybury, and including him in that class of persons which she asserted was most charitably inclined.

"I will maintain," continued Mrs. Matthews, "that the middling sort of people are the people that'll people heaven."

"Because there is a greater proportion of them, perhaps," said Mr. Maybury.

"No," returned Mrs. Matthews; "I

mean on account of their being more generally inclined to do good—and don't mistake me, in the middling class, I include all those between the quality and the *very very* rich, and those who work hard for their bread ; of course, persons in our station of life, I consider of the middle class.—Why, what good do the great folks do ?" continued Mrs. Matthews, rapping her fore-finger on the table, "oh, now and then, no doubt," said she, hearing some dissentient observations, "no doubt there are exceptions ; but take 'em in the long run ; look at the general tenor of their lives ; don't they get up in a morning and lie down at night, full of nothing but their own vain pursuits, without a thought of their imperishable spirit ? Only to see their Sundays ! My ! why 'tis a gay day and a holiday with them !"

" I am afraid," observed Mr. May-

bury, "you will find in all ranks a very reprehensible disregard of that sacred day; but I am inclined to think, that however sinful the present race may be, they are not worse than former times: if there are many examples of wickedness, there are also many examples of excellent Christians; and there is certainly a spirit of righteousness stirring up amongst us, and has so far gained ground in the world, as to make some appearance of religion necessary to respectability."

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Matthews, "there is a great deal of outward godliness going on in the world; a great deal of *perfection*, but little of practice, I fear: some of the great folk, to be sure, will exhibit their fine clothes at church, but afterwards, 'tis my belief, they think no more about the matter than them that don't go at all, nor not so much perhaps: then the dinuers, and the parties, that

there are Sunday evenings; and, from what I can learn, I find cards are not uncommon on that day: Why, is it right, is it proper, in a Christian country, to have such doings?"

" Oh, 'tis very wrong, 'tis very wrong," said Mr. Brown, " there is enough days in the week, for our amusement, without encroaching on Sunday: it oughtn't to be."

" For my part, I think there's nothing but vanity going on in the world; and as for charity," said Mrs. Matthews, " why, you might as well expect a tree to give to a beggar;—none of your fine folks think it right to encourage beggars. Only take the trouble, for five minutes, to watch a poor woman and child sitting on a step," continued Mrs. Matthews, meaning to be pathetic, " and observe who are the persons that bestow their

charity: a lady, elegantly attired will pass by, too much employed in considering about the expensive dress she is going to order, even to notice the unfortunate objects before her; another sees and hears the miserable creature's distress, but, selfish and unfeeling, passes on without shewing the slightest concern; a third, with a trifle more feeling, perhaps, will content herself with, 'I've nothing for you;' but a servant, or a person in a low rank of life, stops, puts her hand in her pocket, and produces a halfpenny—a small relief, but enough to shew the donor's goodwill."

"Yes, 'tis very true," observed Mr. Maybury, "I believe the lower class are much more inclined to casual charity; but then it is the only way in which they *can* be charitable, you know, whereas people of fortune have various ways of contributing to the relief of the poor."

“ That’s what I was going to say ; they think *suscribing* to a few charitable institutions is doing every thing required of them ; and if an occasion offers, when a person of consequence intercedes for some unfortunate family, they shew a great readiness to *contribut* ; but there is a great deal of *self* in all these ways of giving, and will not redound to the donor’s spiritual advantage, unless what is given is from a proper sense of duty ; nor are those a bit better, who, to get rid of a troublesome mendicant, fling him a shilling, but would unfeelingly withstand the more silent appeals of poverty.”

“ Then to think of the extravagance that there is in high life !” exclaimed Mrs. Brown ; “ what sums are thrown away on an evening’s entertainment !”

“ It is a serious question to us all,” observed Mr. Maybury, “ how far we

are entitled to indulge in the luxuries of this life, if it renders us the less able to afford relief to a fellow-creature in want. We should say to ourselves, what right have I to enjoy expensive *superfluities*, when I must be aware there are many objects in want of absolute *necessaries*. In sitting down to a sumptuous repast, when I behold the profusion and waste of costly provisions, I cannot help feeling a sort of repugnance to partake of them."

" L—d!" cries Mr. Hutchins, " it seems to me, one never thinks of what misery there's going on in the world when one's in pleasant company, and has good things set before one; ha! ha! ha! L—d what's the use to go making oneself feel uncomfortable about what one can't help.—At such a time as that too! there's a time for all things, you know."

" Even in the gayest scenes, reflection

will sometimes intrude," said Mr. Maybury: "when I have seen the wine freely circulate, my busy fancy has frequently suggested what good a few glasses might do some poor invalid, whose friendless poverty denies the cordial necessary to his recovery; then what thoughts rush upon one's mind, to think how often wine is taken undesired,—taken to excess,—taken after any gratification it may afford has ceased in intoxication."

"Yes," languidly agreed Mr. Hutchins, "yes, 'tis very true; but I really don't see how it is to be avoided:—some are rich, and some are poor; if we were all rich, why there would be an end of the use of riches, and we must all work for ourselves, and live like so many savages."

"You are leading us from the subject Mr. Hutchins," said Mrs. Matthews. "Mr. Maybury was not contending that there ought to be no distinction of rank,

he was lamenting that rich people do not make a better use of their fortunes."

"Indeed I don't know," returned Mr. Hutchins, "but that it's all as it should be. When I hear people cry out against an extravagant entertainment, I'm apt to think,—well, the giver of the feast will be the poorer, and many others will be all the better for it. Money is by this means distributed."

"Certainly, it is desirable that money should circulate," observed Mr. Maybury; "but the question is, whether, if you lavished your fortune in useless profusion, you would feel as happy on your death-bed, to recollect the manner in which your money had been circulated, as you would be if you had entertained a less numerous circle of friends, and had yourself inspected the house of poverty, and ad-

ministered to the wants of its suffering inmates."

" Well, for my part," replied Mrs. Bennet, " I think the poor have brought their poverty on themselves, by their own bad conduct ; and therefore 'tis no more than serves 'em right ; and I'm sure it never can be intended that we are all to make ourselves wretched or uncomfortable, on account of the misery of other people : there would be nothing else but misery in the world then, I'm sure : every one has a right enjoy himself according to his own ability, that's what *I* think."

" Ah my dear Madam," said Mr. Maybury, " that is the language of one little accustomed to inspect the miserable condition of the poor wife and children, who have been undeservedly brought to want and wretchedness by the bad conduct of a husband and father. Too many people, I fear, withhold relief from the unfortu-

nate petitioner, lest he should not be a worthy object ; but which, let me ask, is the safest course to steer, to run the risk of giving to the unworthy, or not to take the chance of succouring an unfortunate but virtuous being."

" Oh certainly, certainly," cried Mrs. Matthews, "'tis better to give twice to the unworthy, than to deny the deserving once!"

" Sensible, *amiable* man!" said Mrs. Brown aside to Maria ; but however desirous she was of recommending Mr. Maybury, Maria had no intention of entering into her schemes ; but even had she been equally solicitous about the matter, there appeared very little prospect of success ; for the gentleman had been so devotedly attached to the departed Mrs. Maybury, that even her personal imperfections had acquired a value in his eyes ;

and as Maria was neither very fat, nor very swarthy, the idea of her becoming Mrs. Maybury did not once enter into his head.

However well meant Mrs. Brown's intentions were, Maria was so much harassed by her increasing anxiety to procure for her "a good husband," that she came to the determination of leaving her present abode as soon as she could hear of a desirable situation as governess.

Mrs. Brown again and again marvelled at her wishing to go ; and never failed, when an opportunity offered, of letting the company they were in, know, that she was going to sustain a very great loss.

"Why, what's the matter?" cried Mrs. Westcott.

"Oh Ma'am ! here's a young lady that

can't be contented to live comfortably with me, but must take it into her head to go and be a governess again ; 'tis so vexing to me to think of it ; and here I want to get her well married ; and a deserving young woman she is, as any I know ; and if any prudent man wanted a wife, why, as I say, he couldn't do better than take my protogée :—ah ! and she wont be portionless neither ; and so I've told her ; and yet nothing will do, but she wants to leave us."

"Indeed, my dear, Madam," said Maria, "you greatly distress me : you know how much I feel the obligations I am under, and—"

"Well, well, we won't talk any more about that ; only recollect, when you find out, as I suspect you will, that you have made a change for the worse, you'll al-

ways find me and my worthy man there, ready to receive you."

Maria being disappointed in not hearing from Lady Warre, took an opportunity of calling on her, to learn whether there was any prospect of a situation in view. She found Miss Warre with her, and Mrs. Fielding, a lady who had shewn particular kindness to Maria while she had been at Lady Warre's; she did not scruple therefore mentioning the purport of her visit. Lady Warre was quite sorry she had not been able to hear of a situation she could recommend, but she would make it a point to have some further inquiries made.

Mrs. Fielding mentioned a lady, who, she had heard, was in want of a young person as an instructress for her children

—“ perhaps, though,” she continued, “ the situation might not exactly suit ; as there are some peculiarities, which you may consider objectionable. The family consists of a mother who is elderly ; her two daughters, one of whom is a widow, with children ; the other daughter is unmarried. The husband of the old lady had been in trade, and I understand left a very handsome fortune behind him. They live in Baker Street ; a friend of mine is intimate at the house, and I heard through him that Mrs. Clements was in want of a governess for her daughters.”

“ I should imagine the situation might suit me very well,” said Maria ; “ but you mentioned that there was something singular about the family, I think.”

“ Why—nothing perhaps, of any importance : a little inclined to fancy themselves persons of consequence ; and very

fond of letting people understand they have been abroad."

" I know whom you mean ;" said Miss Warre.

" Merely because they happened many years ago to have spent some time in Italy, for the health of one of the family, they returned home pluming themselves on being superior to all their acquaintance ; and though no one had before ever heard of their passion for antiques, paintings, and classical ground, they now expect to be looked up to for their opinion, which they give in a decisive tone, with an air of conscious judgment ;—as if the bare circumstance of their having been in Italy, exalted them to the rank of antiquarians and patrons of the fine arts !"

" Yes, yes," said Mrs. Fielding, " there is a little too much of all that."

“ Then,” continued Miss Warre, who seemed to take a particular pleasure in ridiculing these ladies; “ they prefer the Italian to all other languages; at the same time they have really so little knowledge of it as scarcely to understand the commonest author; then it is so annoying to hear their perpetual common-place remarks on the superiority of the ancients on sculpture, architecture, &c. which they always contrive to introduce, let the conversation be what it will. If the building of a mere cottage is talked of, they will be sure to depreciate the merits of their own countrymen, and bring in St. Peter’s and the Vatican, head and shoulders, to remind people that they have had the singular felicity of visiting Italian ground. The old lady is tutored to hold her tongue, I believe, for she is apt to blunder about the *Herculean* MSS., and tells you of the curious *antics* and collection of *marvels* she has seen.”

“ Your account is rather overcharged,” said Mrs. Fielding, smiling ; “ but with all these little blemishes, they are very worthy good sort of people : they are in the habit too of receiving literary persons at their house, and I believe Miss Mullens, the sister of Mrs. Clements, is considered very learned, and has an extensive correspondence with people of that sort.”

“ Oh yes,” cried Miss Warre, “ but most particularly with her friend Miss Stockland. They say their correspondence is intended for publication ; I should like vastly to see it.”

“ I am afraid,” said Maria, “ I should be considered but a contemptible pretender ; for of course they would superintend the young ladies’ studies.”

“ Oh no, I fancy not,” said Mrs. Fielding ; “ for Mrs. Clement’s time is intirely

taken up with seeing company, and paying visits ; her sister's with her correspondence ; and the old lady is not at all disposed to give herself more trouble than she can help. You would have the little girls to yourself, and I know enough of you, to be certain they could not be in better hands."

Maria considered the situation as eligible as any she might be likely to hear of, and requested Mrs. Fielding to make some further inquiries.

CHAP. VII.

THE next day, Maria was returning from calling on an acquaintance in the neighbourhood, when she was overtaken by Mr. Sedgwick. Since the day he had discovered her residence, he had found frequent opportunities of falling in her way. Though a libertine from habit, he was not devoid of principle : he soon perceived that Maria had too much sense to be thrown off her guard by flattery ; and though he had presumed to suppose that her present situation was not exactly cor-

responding to her taste, and to insinuate that it might be in his power to offer her one more congenial, the propriety of her conduct had taught him to regard her with respect: the passion she had inspired had taken deeper root, and convinced that dishonorable proposals would be treated with contempt, he had debated within himself on the course he ought to pursue, and had at length determined to declare his serious attachment, and to put his intentions past a doubt, to solicit an introduction to her friends.

Maria's heart fluttered: a variety of considerations instantaneously filled her mind: the advantages of such a connexion very powerfully urged their claims in Sedgwick's favor: but the recollection of certain equivocal language he had used on a former occasion, made her pause to reflect on his character. A comparison too, between him and George Worthington,

was considerably against him ; and though Maria, for the sake of the uncertain attachment of Worthington, would not have precipitately slighted Mr. Sedgwick's overtures, had he been a man she could esteem ; yet conscious she entertained for him no sentiments of regard, she let him understand it was impossible for her to listen to his addresses.

Sedgwick pleaded his cause very eloquently, and when they arrived at Mr. Brown's, he detained her a few minutes at the garden gate, entreating her to give his suit further consideration ; when Maria, on turning her head towards the house, perceived Mr. and Mrs. Brown taking leave of a gentleman whose back was towards her.

“ Oh here she is,” cried Mrs. Brown, and the next moment George Worthing-

ton hastened forwards to meet her; but on seeing Sedgwick, he paused a few moments before he spoke.

“ I am afraid, Miss Shirley,” said he, as soon as he had recovered his surprise, “ I am come rather unseasonably.”

“ By no means, Sir, I am always happy to see you.”

“ I am going into Wales,” continued George, “ and I intend calling at Abersfowey, to make my inquiries after your respected father, and shall be happy to be entrusted with any commands.”

“ You are very kind, Sir; certainly I shall be obliged by your taking a letter for me:—when do you go?”

“ In a few days:—shall I send for your letter to-morrow?”

“ You are very good ;—if you please ;—I shall be much obliged to you.”

George then took leave, evidently much chagrined.

Mrs. Brown was so sorry, she said, that Maria was out when Mr. Worthington called ; for he seemed such a nice young man, and made so many kind inquiries after her father, that he quite won her heart. “ I could soon see, you know, how matters were,” continued Mrs. Brown. “ To be sure young Webb is not such a fine gentleman, nor all that, though he’d have been a very good match : but if you like this’n better, why there’s no help for it : to be sure, he did seem so disappointed, when we said you was out, and he raily turned quite pale, when he saw that gentleman at the door with you. *I* was vexed too, because things of that sort make misunderstandings. Many’s the

good match that has been broke off by a less thing than that:—why now, there was Sally Pullen; she was as good as engaged to a young man here, not far off, young Mr. Jameson, with very good expectations: why you must have seen him, a nice tall young man;—he passed us t'other day when were speaking to Mrs. Wilkins,—dont 'e recollect,—law, why I thought you must have seen him; well there, what was I going to say; oh, so you know, 'twas all in a manner settled between 'em; and there, there came an old lover of her's from Ireland, and because she didn't turn her back upon him at once, young Mr. Jameson here takes it into his wise noddle to be jealous; and then one word brought on another, 'till they had a downright quarrel, and the match was entirely broke off: 'twas such a pity, and such nonsense of 'em both. I've no patience with such people, not I; oh, but now I want sadly to know, who

that gentleman was, that was with you, because I do think it must have looked a little strange to Mr. Worthington, when I said you was gone to see a friend you know ; and then you coloured up so, and seemed so flurried, I couldn't think what was the matter with you, not I ; Mr. Worthington must have observed it."

Maria now informed her that it was a Mr. Sedgwick, a gentleman she had often seen at Lady Warre's.

Ah, there 'tis now ; I was afraid how 'twould be : 'tis no good you know, for me to think of any suitable match for you while you got your head filled with these fine gentlemen. I only hope and trust you won' find yourself deceived. You are but young in life, and you've no notion of the wickedness that there's going on in the world. It seems to me I've heard his name before. I'm afraid he's one of the

bad sort ; I don't like his looks :—Sedgwick, Sedgwick, I think it's the same : hasn't he an uncle that lives in Berkeley Square, or somewhere thereabouts ?—Ah ! then 'tis certainly the same man that Mrs. Westcott was telling me about. There was a little mantua-maker came up from the country to learn the London fashions you know, and she was with Mrs. Salter near a year : she was a pretty genteel looking girl, but her head was stuffed full of novuls ; and she had vanity enough for twenty : so there this Mr. Sedgwick got acquainted with her, and she, poor thing, was foolish enough to listen to his flattery and nonsense, and left her employers ; and now, nobody knows what's become of her : no good I fear. Mrs. Westcott will tell you all the particulars.

Maria was too ingenuous to conceal any thing from one, who, she felt assured, had a sincere regard for her ; and Mrs.

Brown was immediately made acquainted with Mr. Sedgwick's proposal, and Maria's answer.

“ You acted perfectly right,” said Mrs. Brown ; “ for what happiness could you look for in a marriage made up in that sort of way ; with a man, that I'll be bound to say, nobody knows whether he's a Christian or a heathen. A husband, as I say, ought to be a second self ; and I'm sure, *you*, that have been brought up by your good father to set a proper value on moral conduct, would enjoy no rational happiness with a man, who I dare to say spends his time in all the follies and vanities of life : no, no ; my dear Maria will never marry a man of his stamp ; and I'm sure you'll never repent of your decision on this occasion.”

Mrs Brown was interrupted by a carriage stopping at her door. “ Bless me !”

cried she, “ who can it be? why 'tis quite my visiting day ! I haven't a notion who it can be ; somebody coming to see you perhaps.”

This conjecture was right : Mrs. Fielding was announced ; and Maria had the satisfaction of hearing from her that Mrs. Clements was much pleased with the account she had received of Maria, and was impatient to have every thing settled. “ If it's not too late,” continued Mrs. Fielding, “ suppose you return with me to town, and call on Mrs. Clements this morning.”

Maria accepted the proposal, and was set down at Mrs. Clements. She was much flattered by her reception, and every arrangement was made to her satisfaction.

On her return home, she finished a letter she had begun writing to her father,

in the expectation of Worthington's sending for it, but having now important information to communicate, she determined to despatch it by the post: George however omitted to send for the letter, as he had promised to do, and though it was now of no consequence, she did not feel the less hurt at his apparent neglect.

CHAP. VIII.

THE following Monday, Maria was to leave Mr. and Mrs. Brown: she assured them of her ever retaining a grateful sense of their kindness, and promising to see them as often as her new situation would permit, she took an affectionate leave of them, and was in an hour afterwards at Mrs. Clements' door.

She was shewn into the morning room, where was only the old lady, Mrs. Mullens, who observed that Mrs. Clements was gone out, having visits to pay, and

that the dear Geraldine was busy writing. "She writes too much," added Mrs. Mullens; "I fear her health will suffer. This climate too is against her. We have been used to Italian skies; and the humid air of England is prejudicial to her delicate constitution. When I see her sitting pensively in her chair, she reminds me very much of a *statute* I saw in the capital at Rome."

"I am sorry to hear Miss Mullens is an invalid," observed Maria, "I hope she will take her friends' advice, and attend more to her health."

"Ah, my dear Miss Shirley, it pains me to the heart to think that while she is the delight of all her friends, she entertains so humble an opinion of herself, that she can't be persuaded of the importance of taking a little care of herself. She is

a sweet interesting creature ; but, alas ! an insatiable thirst after knowledge has undermined her constitution ; her strength of mind outruns her strength of body. You'll be delighted with her ; she is a sweet, interesting creature."

Maria having inquired after the Miss Clements, Mrs. Mullens continued, " they are very well, I believe. I have not seen them to-day ; but their mother will introduce you to them. I expect her home every minute."

A carriage soon afterwards stopt at the door, and Mrs. Clements presently entered the room, elegantly dressed, and, with a great deal of vivacity in her manner, began, " Miss Shirley, I beg ten thousand pardons for not being at home to receive you. Some very particular visits, which could not be postponed, obliged me

to be absent. I have seen the Montresors," continued Mrs. Clements, turning to her mother, " most delightful people."

" How long is it since they were at Florence?"

" Many years now : they knew all our acquaintance there ; were quite intimate with *i Venuti* :—they will make a delightful addition to our circle ; I've invited them to our conversazzioni. I afterwards called on Lady Carwardine, and made her promise to come ; and Mr. Silvester hopes he shall be able to bring Mr. Capel with him. I'm dying to be introduced to him ; a man of most distinguished abilities. My dear Geraldine must not be disturbed, I conclude. Therefore, suppose Miss Shirley, we send for the children ; but let me see the hour ; it's later than I had any idea of ; I must

dress for dinner : you'll excuse me, Miss Shirley."

At dinner time, Maria, for the first time saw the Letter-writer. She had imagined that Miss Mullens was younger than her sister ; and as the fond expressions of "the dear Geraldine,"—"sweet, interesting creature," &c. had been lavished on her, Maria had anticipated the appearance of something angelic, and was grievously disappointed to find her considerably older than Mrs. Cléments. Her figure was not amiss ; but, though her features were not absolutely ugly, her face was by no means pleasing : there was something repulsive in her aspect ; and her manners exhibited the appearance of conscious superiority, and an affected indifference to the common forms of life.

She complained of a head-ach, which

immediately excited in her mother and sister the most tender sympathy. “ You must indeed, my dear Geraldine, give yourself some relaxation: it’s absolutely necessary for your health. We’ll go to the sea-side, or make a tour—where shall we go?”

“ My dearest mother,” said Geraldine, with a contradictory asperity of voice, “ with very good intentions, you propose what, at present, is impossible: I cannot relinquish what I have undertaken. Some months hence, perhaps, I may find leisure to pay my dear Miss Stockland a visit. The letter I have received to-day presses me much to come to her.” Then, regardless of the interruption which it occasioned to the progress of the dinner, she produced a letter which she opened, and, after looking it over for some time, read aloud the following extract:—

“ If my dear and amiable Miss Mullen could spare her ever-admiring friend a portion of her valuable time, nothing could so much contribute to my happiness. The cottage we are in is a most delightful retreat, and only wants the charm of your enviable society to make it a terrestrial paradise.

“ I have lately met some very agreeable friends of yours, the Norris family. They spoke with rapture of the pleasant time they spent at Worthing while you were there. I allowed Mrs. Norris to run on half an hour in your praise. My heart beat responsive to every encomium she bestowed. ‘ Could you but know her—’ said she. I could then no longer refrain from informing her, that I too had the supreme felicity of calling you my friend. The bands of friendship, which had been so recently cemented, now

seemed more closely riveted: a new tie attached us to each other—”

“ What a delightful correspondent!” cried Mrs. Clements. “ Do, Geraldine, gratify Miss Shirley with the perusal of the remainder.”

The letter was handed to Maria, who could with difficulty repress a smile as she perused the *tirade* of egotism and adulation it contained.

“ How shall I testify my obligations to my ever dear Miss Mullens for her two last letters. Would I were more worthy of the kind expressions of regard they contain; but, alas! I am a sinner of the greatest magnitude, for I am now in arrear to innumerable correspondents, owing to an untoward gathering on my fore-finger, which has prevented my using

a pen for some time ; but be assured, my dear Madam, you are the first to whom I have indited an epistle.

“ Good Dr. L. paid me a visit this morning, and gratified me much by his unqualified approbation of you. I was sorry to observe he appeared getting very scorbutic. The sister of Lord D*****, whom you and I recollect the gayest of the gay at Florence, is now reduced (such is our lot in this changeful world !) to absolute beggary. I am told she has not more than three hundred a-year to subsist on : would it were in my power to assist her.

“ Dear Miss Sackers gave me a day in her way to Bath with her sick father. How sad a lot is hers ! Her beloved parent deprived of the use of his limbs ; a mother blind and peevish ; her only sister

in jail ; and her brother returned home, with his legs and arms shot off—a mere trunk !

“ Miss Dennison’s friend I have seen. She called on me one morning, and I had to endure her above an hour. Dorfield was with me. He is amazingly diverted with her, he says ; and has let me into her history. She was left an orphan destitute of support ; but she had numerous friends with whom she resided in succession, and outlived them all, and now constantly carries about with her a variety of heterogeneous tokens of their good-will. One left her a worked-bed and six chairs to correspond, a reading-desk, and a few odd articles of plate ; others had bequeathed such of their clothes as she thought proper, and some rings and jewellery (old fashioned trumpery) ; while her last and best friend had left her a small independence, on which, with the strictest

attention to frugality, she contrives to make a very respectable appearance. Retaining an habitual veneration for her departed patronesses, many of their dresses are worn without alteration, so that Miss Beaufoy always conveys the idea of a card-figure undergoing the various metamorphosis of fashion. She appeared at a party last night, at Mrs. Ravenscroft's, and underwent a general discussion ; some asserting that her gown had been all the rage in the reign of George the First ; others, that her fan had belonged to her great-grandmother ; that her rings had encircled the lean fingers of five successive maiden sisters ; that her veteran shawl had braved a century, yet still retained a shattered portion of its pristine magnificence, but, worn to a cobweb, seemed to hold together by a miracle ; while her laces exhibited curious specimens of all the various fashions from old yellow point to modern mechlin.

“ Mrs. Panter tells me she has written you three letters, without having received one line from your valued pen: how is this? pray write her soon: she is an inestimable woman.

“ Have you read Mr. Filmer’s new Poem? I am delighted with it. Dorfield says it is the best thing that has appeared since Milton. I am afraid that is saying too much; but Dorfield is an enthusiast.

“ The books I ordered have not yet been forwarded to me. When you see Harman pray jog his memory.

“ Before I close, need I again repeat how impatient we are all for your sweet converse to enliven our retirement. My grandmother unites in the ardent wish to see you here. She is wonderfully well for one at her late hour; though she has,

I fear, severely felt the nipping frosts which we have lately experienced. To protect this tender plant through the winter, I shall deem no exertions too great, no sacrifices too precious.

“ When you see Miss Wren, tell her how much I love her.

“ I have much more to say, but must postpone it till another opportunity. In the mean time, let me beseech you to assure yourself of the unutterable sentiments of respect and regard with which I am your ever-admiring friend, and

Most obedient humble servant,

“ CLEMENTINA STOCKLAND.”

CHAP. IX.

THE next morning Maria entered upon her office of instructress. She began with some degree of alarm, expecting the ladies of the family would regard her with a watchful eye, and be ever on the alert to discover some defect in her mode of instruction ; but, to her great relief, she found they gave themselves no concern about the matter ; and, as if satisfied that having provided a governess for the children, they had done every thing they were in duty bound to do for them, they seemed

to consider themselves at full liberty to attend to their own affairs, without a thought whether the little girls were in proper hands or not.

About two o'clock some ladies called on Mrs. Clements, to whom Maria was introduced, and some time afterwards a gentleman or two dropped in. Mr. Arkwright called to shew Miss Mullens a specimen of a work he had undertaken for the purpose of introducing a new system of orthography, which he contended would most materially benefit the English language. "I will not have one redundant letter," continued Mr. Arkwright, talking fast, with a large tongue, inclinable to sputter; "every letter shall be of use to express the sound—"

"But such an innovation, Sir," said

Mr. Turton, " would tend to destroy the etymology and—"

" I am aware," interrupted Mr. Arkwright, " of all the arguments against it ; but they go for nothing with me : they are not worth a moment's attention. With regard to etymology, the learned would still understand the derivation of every word, and to the unlearned it is a matter of little consequence ; and the advantages are incalculable—"

" I am inclined to think, Sir," observed Miss Mullens, " that the scheme you propose would be considerably outweighed by new difficulties that would be introduced. By the adoption of your system, we should, in a few years, so far forget our written language, that authors of the past age would become totally unintelligible."

" By no means, Miss Mullens," sput-

tered Mr. Arkwright; “ you would be just as well able to read them as you are at present. Do you, let me ask, understand Chaucer the less because he spells *head* without an *a*? I am not proposing to alter the language; I am not proposing to substitute one word for another; I am not proposing to omit any necessary word or letter; but, simply, to spell words as nearly as possible to correspond with their sound.”

“ Well, Sir, but according to your plan, you must first fix upon a standard of sound. How, pray, do you propose to get over this difficulty?”

“ To me, Madam, it is no difficulty at all: it is part of my plan to establish a correct pronunciation; and with respect to my new system of orthography, there shall be a society instituted by Government to decide on, and to publish to the

nation at large, the improvements I propose. I will begin with dismissing all our barbarous Saxon terminations."

" You would certainly deserve well of your country, Sir," said Miss Mullens, " if you can bring all this about ; but I very much fear you would meet with great opposition. People are not fond of innovations, and will not be so easily convinced of the necessity of the amendment you propose, as you may imagine."

Mr. Arkwright grew warm : " Perhaps not, Madam, perhaps not ; but I would have Government enforce it ; there shall be a penalty for transgressing the rules laid down."

" That would be going rather too far, I fear, in a free country," said Mr. Turton ; " we should read of Hannah Dobbins being committed to jail for not spelling

cow with a k ; for I suppose that is how you would have it spelt."

" Undoubtedly, Sir ; most undoubtedly I would have cow spelt with a k."

" And *calf*, Sir ?"

" And calf, Sir."

" Why then, I presume," said Mr. Turton, " you reckon among your warmest supporters, the loyal cit, who gave as a toast, the ' King and Constitution,' under the concise figure of the two k's."

" You are pleased to be merry, Sir ; but my scheme is too well digested to be overthrown by ill timed ridicule. The attempts that have hitherto been made to effect the object I have in view, have failed, by aiming at too much. *My* plan is better arranged. I don't propose

to establish my entire system at once. I shall begin by paring away all useless excrescences before I attempt to substitute one letter for another; every thing will be done in due time, though it may be many years before cow is spelt with a k."

" So I should imagine."

" But it will not be the less certain. The system I propose, every hour discloses new beauties and fresh advantages; but it will of course be a work of time to meet the prejudices of a nation, and to overturn the received usage of ages."

While Mr. Arkwright was maintaining his projected improvement, Mrs. Clements was entertaining her visitors with a variety of amusing anecdotes, which she detailed with great fluency. They had

been recently introduced to her ; and as no higher titles moved in their circle of acquaintance than Mr. Mrs. and Miss, the familiar style in which she spoke of nobility and royalty not a little excited their wonder, to the infinite satisfaction of Mrs. Clements.

Maria's attention had been engrossed by the wild speculations and vehement gestures of Mr. Arkwright ; but, on perceiving a general movement among the ladies, to inspect a small box which Mrs. Clements was shewing them, her curiosity also led her to that part of the room.

“ It's the most beautiful thing of the kind I ever saw,” continued Mrs. Clements : “ the interior is of the most pure virgin gold, and the outside, you see, is studded with every known species of precious stone. There's a singular story connected with it. Colonel Vavasour brought

it from India for his sister, a most particular friend of mine, who was afterwards married to Sir James de Lancy, and is now, alas! no more. A servant of the Colonel's, in whom he placed the most implicit confidence, had the care of a variety of articles of value ; and this very servant, to whom the Colonel had been a great benefactor, absconded with every thing as soon as they landed in England ; this box among the rest. The property was of course advertised, but no tidings could be heard of any one single article. Some years afterwards, during the short peace, Sir James and Lady de Lancy took a trip to Paris ; and, being in the habit of purchasing fancy articles, they happened to meet with this box, which they obtained for a mere trifle, fifty guineas, I believe. On their return to England, it was of course shewn to their friends, and Colonel Vavasour immediately recognized his lost treasure ;

which, by a singular transition, had found its way into the possession of the very person for whom it had been intended.

“Colonel Vavasour told me of another remarkable occurrence that happened to him. His most particular friend at school was a boy of the name of Cameron. When they were about fifteen, young Cameron went to Edinburgh, and his friend to London, and from thence to India. His name was at that time Brown. The family took the name of Vavasour soon after his arrival in India. Five and twenty years rolled over his head, and he returned to his native country. During his residence in India he married Miss Dampier, an arrival from England; and, on their coming to London, Colonel Vavasour was introduced to his wife’s uncle, the earl of Clandonald, who informed him that he had been in India several years ago, (where he had a very high appointment,)

but had been obliged to return very soon to England for the recovery of his health. He was then Lord Macallan; and he recollects having once casually met Colonel Vavasour at the Governor's. He expressed much regret at leaving India so soon; as he had hoped to meet his friend Augustus Brown, though, probably, he observed, in my altered person he would scarcely recognize Colin Cameron.

“ Colonel Vavasour was perplexed and surprized. Mutual explanations took place; when it appeared, that by the death of several persons, who were the immediate heirs of the earldom of Clandonald, Cameron's father had succeeded to the title. Lord Macallan had not been aware of the change in his friend's name, and had actually spoken to him at the Governor's levee in India, on the same day that he had made inquiries after his friend Brown.

“ Were you to see Colonel Vavasour you would hardly suppose,” said Mrs. Clements, directing her auditors’ attention to a group of miniatures, “ that that blooming face was considered an excellent likeness of him when he left England. The companion to it is his sister, my lamented friend, Lady de Lancy. She was a great beauty, and a most fascinating woman. She was the only English woman in whom it was said the Parisian ladies acknowledged a rival. She was called *la belle Angloise*, while the rest were mere *bourgeoise*.”

“ The portrait in the blue scarf, I presume, is intended for Mrs. Clements,” observed one of the ladies.

“ Yes, and was a very correct resemblance; as a most remarkable circumstance respecting it proves: when we were at Florence, we had the honor of

being very much noticed by the Princess di Montebello, one of the most charming women in the world : she was pleased to express a wish to have my picture : her highness's wish was of course a command : I accordingly sat to the first miniature painter in Florence, an artist of wonderful talents ; quite a young man ; he fell a martyr to his profession, and his death has of course materially enhanced the value of all the productions of his imitable pencil. The miniature was so much admired, that I ordered a copy to be done for my mother, while we made a tour to Naples. Some weeks after our arrival in that delightful capital, I was introduced to a Sicilian nobleman. After conversing for some time, he observed, he was sure he had seen me before, but was unable to recollect at what place : he inquired whether I had ever been at Genoa or at Florence. Most certainly I had, but not at the times he mentioned : 'twas

strange and unaccountable, he said ; for he had a perfect recollection of my features, and even remembered the dress I had worn ; he then mentioned the blue scarf : this circumstance explained every thing ; it was my picture he had seen. When the copy was finished, the Princess preferred it to the original, so that the miniature before you is the very one which made such an impression on the Count. When we left Florence, the Princess presented me with this beautiful intaglio, as a token of her regard : it is a perfect unique. I believe I may venture to say it is the only one in the world ; and it had the merit," continued Mrs. Clements, " of having arrested the powerful arm of the Inquisition. It belonged to the late Pope, who was in the habit of sealing his private letters with it : he afterwards gave it to his relation, the Marchese D'Alicata, a young man of eccentric character, who amused himself with travelling incog,

and by some imprudence got involved in an affair which subjected him to a visit from the officers of the inquisition: he found means, however, of procuring writing materials, and dispatched a letter to the **Holy Office**, in the name of the Pope, stating that the prisoner was the son of his particular friend, and requesting that he might be immediately liberated. The writing was but an indifferent imitation of the Pope's, but the seal carried authenticity with it, and the Marquis gained his liberty."

Mrs. Clements seemed to have no intention of suffering her visitors to depart; and before they could find an opportunity of taking leave, she detailed several court anecdotes, and the history of a curious Chinese fan, which had belonged to the late queen of France. Mrs. Mullens too, seemed to think that much remained to be spoken of, and hinted that another

time Mrs. Clements would shew them some beautiful specimens of *laver* from Mount Vesuvius, and the *casks* of some *statutes* that were nearly equal to the originals.

CHAP. X.

THE first week that Maria spent at Mrs. Clément was a fair specimen of the way in which the family spent their time. Maria breakfasted with her pupils, attended to their instruction, and walked out with them: she dined with the family, and in the evening formed part of the drawing-room circle; for they had generally some company, frequently persons of superior literary character, and Maria was upon the whole very well satisfied with her situation.

Mrs. Mullens did not go out much, and Geraldine still less, being generally engaged either in reading or writing; and her correspondence with Miss Stockland, which it was understood was intended for publication, occupied a considerable portion of her time.

Mrs. Clements was all gaiety and spirits: she looked in for five minutes in a morning, when Maria was attending the children, and repeating how happy she felt in their having such an excellent instructress, hurried away to her carriage to make visits.

They had a large acquaintance, and went out often to concerts and evening parties, and one day in the week was devoted to a *conversazzioni* at their own house. On these occasions a particular set of people had a general invitation, and if they

introduced a new literary friend they were doubly welcome.

One of these parties was to take place a few evenings after Maria's arrival, and her curiosity was not a little excited to see how it would be conducted.

The first visiter that made her appearance was an elderly figure, who was announced Lady Carwardine, and was received with distinguished respect ; in return for which, she undertook to give them all the particulars of a recent illness. Her narrative was interrupted by the arrival of two ladies and a gentleman, particular friends of Mrs. Clements ; and they immediately began to talk over two or three parties where they had lately met.

A variety of company followed ; some

violently fashionable in their appearance, others studiously the reverse.

Mrs. Errington assumed her seat at the end of an ottoman with an air of contemptuous stateliness, which naturally provoked the question, "who is she?" and the interrogator was immediately struck dumb with "*Bold Truths, or Social Evils*, a philosophical novel, in seven octavo volumes."

The next person announced was Mr. Vyvian, a round good-humoured little man, with a bald head covered with a coating of powder and pomatum, scrupulously scraped into form, to represent hair. Being a notorious man of genius, he was greeted on every side by persons anxious to prove themselves among his friends. Another visiter however laid claims to superior talents, and the name of

Miss Archer excited no small sensation : she was a little squat figure, with a face that seemed determined to refute the axiom, that

Eternal smiles an emptiness betray,
As shallow streams run dimpling all the way.

The exacting mutability also of two eyes, whose glazy blackness aimed at brilliant intelligence, directed a fatiguingly endless artillery at every one within eye-shot. The *empressement* with which the kisses on either cheek, and the pressures and swayings of both hands were lavished on the little lady by Miss Mullens, needed no explanation ; for the object of them was almost immediately led by Mr. Vyvian to the literary altar, a rose-wood table, with a reading lamp, placed in the centre of the room, supporting the quarto edition of Scott's *Lord of the Isles*.

Miss Archer recited without a pause the first canto of the poem ; and as soon as the buzzing homage of compliment had subsided, Mr. Vyvian, on a nod and a beck from Mrs. Clements, prepared to obey her commands ; and having rung for a tumbler of water, gave a recitation of “ Alonzo the brave and the fair Imogene :” in the course of which, an emphatical knock of the knuckle on the side of the tumbler, produced a solemn imitative effect as he repeated

When the bell of the castle tolled one.

A slender stooping gentleman, who had been brought by Mr. Vyvian, and was his particular friend, now began with a querulous humility of voice, to put about in a half audible whisper, something respecting elegies and sonnets, of which Mr. Vyvian might *possibly* have some in his pocket.

The company began to crowd round Mr. Vyvian with that sort of polite hustling which bespeaks the gratitude of the fashionable world towards the possessor of talents that can divert lassitude. Mr. Vyvian was not one of those, “ who would be wooed, and not unsought be won ;” his consent almost outran the request : to say the truth, he was vain of his talents : nor did he attempt to disguise it ; for he was too simple and frank in his nature to disguise any thing ; and if vanity ever was agreeable, it was so in this good humoured instance. His feet moved with mechanical compliance towards the reading table, and his hands began simultaneously to fumble in his pocket. In the search, various loose papers fell on the carpet, and were sedulously and obsequiously picked up by his shadowy companion. Mr. Vyvian assuring himself by an anxious side glance, that they were in safe

keeping, proceeded to give a reading of an unpublished

SONNET

TO THE CANDLE-SHADE OF A DEAR FRIEND.

Thou art a thing of silk : and thou wert spun
From forth the tiny bowels of a worm :
And now thou spreadest out thy fan-like form,
Green as the green grass in an April sun.
This is not all thy glory, or thy good :
Thou art not made to please an idle eye,
Like many creatures that are flesh and blood :
For while his tabby cat lies purring by,
My friend sits musing, pen in hand ; and thou
Screenest the candle-glare, that on his brow
Flickers as through a veil ; which otherwise
Would dim with blearing light his dazzled eyes.
And that fine ode is owing, dearest John !
To that green shade which thou didst gaze upon.

Expressions of delight and rapturous applause were received by Mr. Vyvian

with unconcealed satisfaction, and he was preparing to gratify the company with another sample of his talents, when Miss Mullens brought Miss Archer to the table; at the same time sending round the room the delightful intelligence that she had prevailed on her accomplished friend to favor them with a specimen of a work on which she was employing her pen, a ballad epic romance, to be entitled,

THE BRIDAL ASSASSIN.

Oh ! 'twas the sound of St. Andrew's bell
That came from the steeple tower :
It came like the toll of a sullen death-knell,
And it shook Lady Claribel's bower.
Oh ! 'twas the clatter of horse's hoof,
That made the hard pebbles fly ;
And where is thy hawberk and helm of proof,
When the borderer's tramp is nigh ?
Then the draw-bridge clank'd to De Courcy's
stride,
And he sprang on his berry-brown steed ;
Adieu, and adieu, my bonny bride ;
For of love there is now no need.

“ Charming ! charming lines indeed,” cried Mrs. Clements : “ they are in the very best style.”

“ Dear me !” exclaimed Lady Cardew, “ what a delightful thing it must be to compose poetry.”

“ What an imagination she has !” cried Mrs. Montresor ; “ what a beautiful picture she has drawn. She, indeed may rank among the first epic geniuses of the age.”

“ I trust,” observed Miss Mullens, with a confident utterance, “ that at length the era is arrived, when all distinction of sex in mind is abolished : when female genius may be allowed to assert its equality with the boasted superiority of man.”

The ladies were all ready to support Miss Mullens, and as they composed the

majority of the company, the gentlemen were unwilling to risque so unequal a combat.

Mrs. Clements, while lavishing smiles on all around her, was secretly much chagrined that Mr. Capel was not arrived ; she had every reason to fear he would not now make his appearance ; and though glad of having Mr. Vyvian and Miss Archer to lend their aid to help off the evening, their recitations wanted the charm of novelty. She had piqued herself on Mr. Capel's attending her conversazioni : she felt it would give it a dignity, and she had boasted to all her friends that he had promised to come. As the evening began to wear away, she became restless and impatient : the company too, seemed to think it a lost case, and by degrees a certain sort of dullness began to pervade the party, when a sudden throwing open of the door, produced

a general breathless pause of expectation ; and the great lion of the evening entered.

Mr. Capel was looked upon as a monster of genius and literature : he was the author of an epic poem, under the title of *Odin*, illustrative of the Scandinavian history and mythology. He had published antiquarian researches in Iceland and Norway ; Italy and Greece ; had written a volume of essays, philological, critical, and political ; and was now busily occupied in an elaborate commentary on the Kantian philosophy. The public mind was in a ferment of expectation ; and as he could scarcely ever be drawn into company, the gratification of Mrs. Clements and Miss Mullens was displayed in repeated thanks. His presence occasioned a sort of awe to pervade the company, who seemed to look for some extraordinary information, every time he was ad-

dressed, even if he were only asked to partake of the refreshments. They seemed to be of opinion, that with proper management he might be familiarized, and attacked him with every ambiguity of polite inuendo, for the purpose of enticing him to recite: he persevered however in parrying their manœuvres, and having advanced but a few paces into the room, he entered into an earnest conversation with Mr. Molesworth, a professed antiquarian, and black-letter man, who began describing with ardour the success attending the unrolling of the **Herculaneum** manuscripts.

Mr. Molesworth was an unceasing talker, an inveterate button-holder; and there appeared but little hope of rescuing Mr. Capel from his clutches.

At length Mrs. Errington made a direct attempt. “Mr. Capel, Mr. Capel,

I want to talk with you about Ossian : I am an enthusiastic admirer of genuine poetry, and if I have any penetration, I feel secure of your voice to sanction my taste. Come, come, my dear Sir," said she, patting a vacant seat next to her, as Mr. Capel had with some shew of politeness approached the lady ; " come, sit down, and let me hear your opinion ; I want very much to have the subject fairly considered."

" My friend, Mr. Molesworth, Madam, is far better able to support your cause ; he implicitly puts his faith in the work. For my own part, I'm satisfied of its being a counterfeit."

Mrs. Errington looked disappointed, and with some degree of asperity observed, she thought he must have adopted his decision rather too hastily.

“ By no means, Madam, the subject has been maturely weighed ; but the more I have studied it, the more I am persuaded of the impossibility of its being a genuine work.”

“ Well Sir, we must of course bow to superior discernment : we must not presume to assert our opinions, though we may not be convinced of the necessity for changing them.”

“ If,” continued Mr. Capel, “ the fact of there being no authentic manuscript, and the absence of any proof of there having ever existed any written document in the language, be not sufficient to convince, further comment on the subject must be considered wholly superfluous.”

The bad success which attended Mrs. Errington’s overture, was no encouragement for any one else to attempt to draw

him out, and he would probably have been suffered to retire into the back-ground with Mr. Molesworth, had not Miss Mullen demanded his attention.

“ We hear that Mr. Randall, the author of the lyrical tale of “ Tom Thumb,” is employed in an epic poem, of which the hero is a quaker.”

“ Original and feeling, no doubt,” exclaimed Miss Archer. “ How superior are the poets of this enlightened age to the mechanical rhymers of the last. Poor Pope! how he would be mortified could he rise from the dead, and be made acquainted with our vast discoveries in poetry! Satire and morality have surely nothing to do with poetry, and Pope was a satirist and a moralist.”

“ Here then is an instance,” said Mr. Capel, “ where ‘ ignorance is bliss ;’ for

had the Romans made the discovery which has been reserved for our more critical age, Horace might have laughed at vice, and Juvenal lashed in vain."

"But Sir," said Miss Archer, a pale emotion crossing her cheek, and a certain quiver of voice, indicating an alarmed doubt, whether Mr. Capel were ironical or serious, "these satirists, I should suppose, could only have been regarded as mere scribblers!"

"I have always understood them to be poets of distinguished celebrity," replied Mr. Capel, in a well-bred low tone of easy superiority; "though confessedly satirists and moralists."

"Assuredly they are compatible," said Mrs. Errington: "assuredly both Juvenal and Pope are poets, while they strike

with the lightning of their verse, the guilty ambition and the folly and corruption of the unprincipled great."

"Yes, Madam," rejoined Mr. Capel, "and we too have a moralist, from whom I would by no means withhold the name of poet, and who has displayed, with no less masterly strokes of painting, the vices and corruption of the *lower* orders of society."

Mrs. Errington was too strenuous an advocate for the people, to brook this observation, which seemed to produce a revulsion of feeling in the two ladies. Mrs. Errington drew back her head, and bit her lip with an air of disappointment; while Miss Archer regarding what had just fallen from Mr. Capel, as supporting her opinion with respect to the superiority of modern poets, bent forwards with a forgiving complacency of aspect.

The political opinions of these ladies were completely at variance ; and though Miss Archer knew as little of the matter as she did of the merits of Horace and Juvenal, she presently took occasion to speak in exulting terms of the dismissal of the whig administration.

A certain distastefulness of lip was observable in Mr. Capel, with a formidable wrinkling of the forehead ; a certain air of shrinking in his whole person, and a restlessness of posture, bespoke the impatience with which he heard the fair politician.

Mrs. Errington trusted that the spirit of Hampden and of Russel would revive in the people ; (Mr. Capel's countenance shewed a sudden flush of illumination) and induce them to rise in a body, and force the Sovereign to re-instate his ministers.

Mr. Capel's frown grew almost terrific ; an ambiguous smile played round the muscles of his mouth, and was not very unlike contempt.

Miss Archer declared she was very glad the King had shewn such spirit, and she hoped this would put an end to all rebellious notions of freedom and right, and all such jacobinical jargon. All freedom, she contended, was a boon from the merciful sovereign. If the ministers were so impertinent as to advise the King contrary to his wishes, they must take the consequences and turn out.

Mr. Capel suddenly rose, and in a tone of enthusiastical energy, repeated,

“ In vain to deserts thy retreat is made ;
The muse attends thee to thy silent shade.
'Tis her's the brave man's latest steps to trace,
Rejudge his acts, and dignify disgrace.

When interest calls off all her sneaking train,
And all the obliged desert, and all the vain :
She waits, or to the scaffold, or the cell,
When the last ling'ring friend has bid farewell."

"Bravo ! bravo !" cried Mrs. Errington : "Mr. Capel you have made me amends for your incredulity as to Ossian."

"Mr. Capel," said Miss Archer, "my friends tell me, that I am apt to be frank, and speak my mind. I think you a republican, and therefore as a man, I don't like you ; but I admire poetry wherever it is to be found, and I admire you as a poet. May I beg a copy ?"

"Your admiration, Madam, is not due to me ; but a copy is at your service."

"Your recitation at least, Sir, claims my applause : may I ask who is the au-

thor ? if not already known, *il sera bientôt deterré.*"

"Madam, I should be loth in the presence of so accomplished a poetess, to name a poet so insignificant."

Miss Archer laid her fan on Mr. Capel's arm, with the same delighted consciousness of new courage as a child feels on stroking a tame lion. She was too much absorbed to perceive a suppressed smile of malice in Mrs. Errington, and a blush that crimsoned her friend Mr. Vyvian to the ears.

"Mr. Capel," pursued Miss Archer, "I must positively know the author."

"The author, Madam, is Mr. Pope."

Mr. Capel then made his bow to the

lady of the house, and abruptly disappeared.

Whatever might be the private sentiments of the company, no one seemed inclined openly to offer their remarks upon Mr. Capel, though a whisper went from one to another, which began with the safe observation of his being an extraordinary genius; to which was added, by the next whisperer, "strange being,"—"uncouth manners"—"petulant temper"—and it was soon privately decreed that a literary luminary might be very disagreeable company.

CHAP. XI.

THE next morning, after Maria had attended her pupils, Mrs. Clements took her to call on Lady Carwardine. They found her in a sitting-room, which much resembled a museum, or repository; crowded with birds and stuffed animals; tables covered with ornamental litters and prettinesses of all sorts, forming a kind of labyrinth, through which Mrs. Clements had to wind her way before she could reach the out-stretched hand of Lady Carwardine. Two or three gentlemen were with her, and she was

so engrossed with a concert that she was to have at her house that evening, that there was little time for her to bestow any attention on Maria, or even to recollect her having asked Mrs. Clements to bring Miss Shirley with her.

It was excusable however; Lady Carwardine was in a dilemma: she had invited a large company; and having several persons coming who were musical *amateurs*, she had determined on entertaining her friends with a concert; but being totally unacquainted with the necessary arrangements, she had made no further preparations, than requesting the persons who were to perform, to bring their instruments and some music, leaving all other matters to chance.

Mr. Parklow having been out of town, had but just heard of his services being put under requisition; and being very

particular with regard to the *eclat* of a musical entertainment (especially when himself was to take a part), he had now called to make further inquiries into her Ladyship's plans. Finding Lady Carwardine's arrangements extremely deficient, Mr. Parklow spoke very despondingly on the subject.

“ Dear me!” cried Lady Carwardine, “ why, where is the difficulty? There's you, and Mr. Knox, and Mr. Fettiplace, and Mr. Serle, and several others, that all play remarkably well; so that —”

Mr. Parklow started fresh objections. Lady Carwardine wished Mr. Knox to lead, because he had been very civil to her lately: now it so happened that Mr. Parklow had predetermined that no one but himself could be so proper to take that post; he therefore assured her Ladyship, that Mr. Knox knew nothing of the

matter, and that it could not be suffered.

Lady Carwardine wished to have the same piece of music played that was so much admired at Mrs. Welsted's.

“ Yes, Beethoven's septette ; but there are two tenors necessary, and we have but one.”

“ Well, I can engage a professional performer for that.”

“ True ; but what shall we do for a flute ?”

“ Oh, you forget ; I mentioned Mr. Fettiplace is coming, and he plays delightfully, every body says : quite beautiful !”

“ Yes, certainly ; he plays ‘ Sweet in

the Woodlands' and 'Moggy Lawder' with variations; but he is by no means equal to playing in concert."

" Dear! how vexing to have such obstacles thrown in the way of my nice concert. I am sure I think, with so many performers, Mr. Knox, and Mr. Fettiplace, and Mr. Serle, and all the rest; persons that I have heard spoken of as such capital players, it would be very strange if one could not get up a little music."

Mr. Parklow endeavoured to explain.

" Well, you understand it best, I suppose," said Lady Carwardine; " but I am sure, at Mrs. Welsted's, every thing went off so well; and I never heard that there had been any fuss made about it at all."

As Mrs. Clements found herself in the unwelcome character of a cypher, she wished good morning, leaving the concert in no very promising state ; nothing settled but that Knox was not to lead ; and with every prospect of discord prevailing over harmony.

Mrs. Clements left her cards at several other houses, and had generally some anecdote to relate of the family, or of some friend of the family ; and if nobility could be introduced into the account, she endeavoured to make it appear, that the Lord or the Lady who figured in these annals, was her particular acquaintance.

Her last visit was to her milliner. The carriage stopped at a respectable looking house in —— Street ; they were ushered up stairs into a handsome drawing-room, where elegant millinery,

splendid mirrors, rich draperies, and superb *et cæteras*, burst on their sight.

Mrs. Clements sauntered round the room till she could obtain an audience of Mrs. Dalton, who was engaged in a close *tête à tête* with a lady, whose serious looks, solemn tones, and energetic gestures, appeared to Maria to denote some momentous concern entirely foreign to Mrs. Dalton's usual avocation; but on the breaking up of the conference, the lady, in an emphatic manner, endeavoured to impress on Mrs. Dalton's memory, the *double* silver trimming, and the *three* little spangles in a cluster, which she implored her not to forget.

Mrs. Dalton was now at liberty to attend to Mrs. Clements, and to bring forwards one tempting article after another, many of which, she assured her, had never been beheld by living creature.

Maria, in the meantime, had leisure to take a survey of the apartment, and her attention was attracted by a group of ladies whose remarks on fashion and expressions of concern for a fatal accident, came piece-meal to her ear.—“ Pretty thing that chenille bonnet!”—“ young horse—dreadful storm”—“ *blonde* trimming,”—“ thrown out of his gig, and killed on the spot;”—“ sweet colour, that;”—“ a cousin of mine,—go into mourning,”—“ gala-ball to night”—“ dreadful accident;—carried home senseless,”—“ most becoming thing imaginable!”

A lady now entered, who would not have obtained immediate attention from Mrs. Dalton, had not her recital of the distress of a poor family, occasioned a sensation which threatened to mar the sale of Mrs. Dalton’s spring fashions: and the expressions, “ oh how very shocking!”

“ I am sure we ought not to squander our money on these trifles, when there is such suffering going on.”—“ No, indeed ; I don’t think I shall afford myself this lace cap ; it is really too dear ;—I believe I must put on my *considering* cap first ;” brought Mrs. Dalton immediately into the midst of the group, with “ the sweetest plume of feathers ever seen :—just the thing to suit your ladyship.”

“ I am sure,” cried Mrs. Howard, “ your ladyship’s compassion would be much excited if you knew the state these poor creatures are in ;—their whole property is lost by this fire, and —”

“ Pray observe the effect of the feathers :—allow me—a little more on the left side—there—beautiful ! ! ”

“ Oh, no, indeed, Mrs. Dalton ;” said Lady Courtington, “ I shall not think

of purchasing such an expensive thing ; I'm very poor just now, and it is a most exorbitant price ;—besides, I really *must* subscribe something for these poor wretches."

" Ah !" pursued Mrs. Howard, " your ladyship's charity will be well bestowed ; the wife and children are totally destitute, and if a sum could be collected,—your ladyship would perhaps allow me to head a subscription with your name ?"

The feathers waved : the lady wavered.

" Your ladyship wore feathers at the Birth-day ;" interposed Mrs. Dalton : " I heard it remarked that your ladyship never looked better. How different it is with some people ; now, there's Lady Boswell can't wear feathers, they are so unbecoming to her."

Lady Boswell and the Birth-day decided it: the plume was bought: upon the strength of which, Mrs. Dalton proceeded to try the effect of a “most *unique* article,—a prismatic silk;—’twas such a novelty,—not a living creature had ever yet beheld it:—it was of a most delicate texture, and yet by no means slight; it would wear for ever.”—A dress of it was immediately ordered; and one of the attendants carried it off in triumph. “Take care,” whispered Mrs. Dalton, “how you make it up, it’s so apt to fray.”

These two victories emboldened Mrs. Dalton, who now produced a rose-colour velvet just received from Paris; which, however, did not succeed to her wish; for just as she had persuaded Mrs. Selby that it was the most becoming colour possible, and a dress was ordered, Mrs. Howard’s pathetic account of the fire,

arrested her attention, and, whether from a desire of appearing charitable, or from real humanity, or that her eye glanced towards an apricot satin, (there is no saying which,) the lady suddenly changed her mind. Nothing but the selvage resisting the blunt edge of Miss Marchant's scissars, made this countermand in time: the rose-velvet was leisurely returned to the drawer, where it had been first deposited, two winters before, under the alluring cognomen of "the almond-blossom;" since which it had been "just the blush," and the preceding spring had seen it "a lovely peach-blossom;" having been at each of these periods the most *nouvelle* article, and ever one of the most "prevailing colours."

No friend of humanity more heartily wished the unfortunate sufferers out of their troubles than did Mrs. Dalton: she had lost many pounds by the non-sale of

her velvet: no matter; Mrs. Howard's bill should be the higher for it.

Mrs. Dalton turned over Mrs. Selby, as a refractory customer, to one of her attendant sylphs, (who came forwards with an opera trip), while she attended to the lady who was so unseasonably obliged to mourn. She came to consult Mrs. Dalton on the proper quantity of grief, and besought her to make every thing as becoming as possible, mourning always making every one look frightful: 'twas quite a nuisance! She was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Probyn, whose valuable communications commanded Mrs. Dalton's best welcome. Mrs. Probyn had met with a serious misfortune: by the loss of trunks on the road she was bereaved of proper costume; and unless immediately supplied, could not possibly make her appearance at the various parties to which she was engaged.

She begged Mrs. Dalton, “*for the love of Heaven*,” not to disappoint her; “pray attend to my directions,” continued she, “ I have four dresses to order, and I have only got them in my head. Could I speak to Miss Marchant? I suppose I shall find her in the other room.”

“ Give me leave, Ma’am;” said Mrs. Dalton, as she stepped before her, and went in search of Miss Marchant, to whom she had to give a private cue before Mrs. Probyn was permitted to see her.

After the different dresses, with all the orders and counter-orders, had been conveyed from Mrs. Probyn’s head to Miss Marchant’s; and the prismatic silk had been shewn, and “ no living creature,” &c. repeated; Mrs. Probyn proceeded to toss over some of the smaller articles, while she exercised her tyrannical judg-

ment on their merits. One thing was frightful; another was absurd; *that* was pretty; she had half a mind to patronize it; but who in the world would wear such a cap as *that*? it was absolutely barbarous!

A timid looking girl with an expression of countenance that interested Maria, stood by, with the utmost patience, to make suitable replies to, "do I look well in this?—Is not that hideous?—Is this becoming? Shall I have it?" and after Mrs. Probyn had been equipped to her satisfaction, she condescended to bestow some small attention to the wants of her young companion, and decided on a hat for her. Mrs. Dalton was to make one of that pattern, and to send it with Mrs. Probyn's things; and was told in a lower tone to put "an inferior lace;—it will do equally well,—you understand me,—*protégée.*"—

“ How ridiculous the Miss Breretons made themselves last night! attempting to waltz, with their clumsy figures! flouncing round and round;”—continued Mrs. Probyn, addressing a lady who was reclining on a grecian couch; “ Lord Valentine Lee declared that Miss Brereton trod on his instep every moment.”

“ And their conversation with the Ambassador,” returned Mrs. Desborough, “ was too absurd; much too absurd; they speak such bad French: 'twould be so infinitely wise to hold their peace.”

“ Young Brereton, I understand, is going the high road to folly;” said Mrs. Probyn; “ my son, who passed through town a few days ago in his way to Cambridge, told me some of his exploits. Brereton rode from London to Brighton in three hours and twenty minutes for a wager, and lost a fine horse by it, that

was worth double the bet: the poor animal died the next day."

"Cruel wretch!" exclaimed Mrs. Desborough. "How delightful this *eau de mille fleurs* is!"

"And then," pursued Mrs. Probyn, "he rode full gallop all over Brighton dressed up as a lady!"

"The acme of absurdity!" cried Mrs. Desborough. "Come, my dear Lucy, may I beg the favor of your exchanging that antediluvian bonnet for something a little more rational. Country cousins;" continued she, aside to Mrs. Probyn, with a glance at her companions; "come up to town for the express purpose of seeing the lions. I'm worn to death with them;—I'm absolutely obliged to jolt over the stones to show the Tower and St. Paul's; to go through the misery of all the kings

in armour,—regalia, and whispering gallery ; to say nothing of **Gog** and **Magog** ! Then I have to loiter away whole days at exhibitions :—tiresome to a degree !”—

CHAP. XII.

THE following Sunday, after chapel, Mrs. Clements took Maria into the Park. As the carriage slowly made its way through the throng, they had leisure to observe the persons in the returning equipages. Mrs. Clements frequently bowing, took care to inform her companion, whenever her acquaintance was graced with a title, or distinguished by connexions of rank; and could point out every person of consequence:—" that's Lord C—— of Newmarket notoriety,— there's the philanthropic Duke of D——:

that's Lady R—— one of the three Law-beauties: that's Mr. Mudlark and Tommy Caterwell of the P——'s set, and there's the divorced Lady B——: that's the prime minister:—look at this pretty woman, I declare she is the most decided beauty I have seen this morning."

Maria's eye strained to catch the last glimpse of the face that had so attracted Mrs. Clements: it was Mrs. Frederick Ponsonby; but Elizabeth had not perceived her cousin.

The name carried consequence with it: through Maria, Mrs. Clements might extend her visiting list to a family highly distinguished. Lady Kingsbury and Mrs. Sunderland would be proud additions to her parties:—"you'll call on your cousin of course."

Maria did not know Elizabeth's address

in town: “that shall be *my* business to ascertain.” Maria knew none of the Ponsonby family,—feared to appear intrusive, and would rather decline calling. Mrs. Clements still hoped to bring it about.

Elizabeth had at this time been in town a fortnight on a visit to Mrs. Philip Ponsonby, when the arrival of her brother Edward and his bride threatened destruction to her comfort.

Edward Meredith had not found the Tenby lady quite so ready as he wished, to bestow her twenty thousand charms on one, who had little more than personal advantages to recommend him; but he had been more fortunate in his speculations in another quarter: he had obtained the requisite dowry, with the *trifling* in-

cumbrance of an empty head. Edward had brought his bride, and his bride's friend to London as a wedding excursion, and Elizabeth had of course been under the necessity of calling on them. She was much disappointed with the appearance of her sister-in-law; for though she doubted not, when she heard of the marriage, that the lady's fortune, had been her principal attraction, yet she had too good an opinion of her brother to suppose he would unite himself to a person that would reflect discredit on his taste; but much of her disappointment was absorbed in the horror of hearing that Mrs. Pratten was in London; she therefore took especial care to impress upon them all, that she was going to return to Woodsbourne immediately.

The call however was returned, and to Elizabeth's utter dismay, Mrs. Pratten accompanied the party. Elizabeth was

taken by surprise; she was sitting with Mrs. Philip Ponsonby, to whom she had to introduce these unwelcome visitors.

Mrs. Pratten without much preface, addressed herself to Frederick;—“I hope my visit, Sir, will not be considered as unseasonable; I would not wish to intrude by no means; but the fact is, my business is with *you*. I’m come for a little law. ‘Tis about an estate which I’m confident we’ve a right to, and it only requires a little stir to—.”

Ponsonby was going to set her right with respect to its being out of his department.

“Excuse me, Sir,” said Mrs. Pratten, interrupting him, “give me leave, one moment;—this estate, you must know, was mortgaged by my great-grandfather to one Yarker, a very great rogue, as I’ve

heard; well, my great-grandfather died in embarrassed circumstances, and there was nobody to look after his affairs: so this Yarker, he got possession; for you see my grandfather was at that time a lad at sea, and careless, like sailors are, never took thought about it; indeed it was not worth much *then*; and so there it never was claimed, and some of this Yarker's family have kept possession ever since; but it is now become very valuable, and I'm told we could recover it: Mr. Pratten don't like meddling in it, but I'm not for giving up things so easily; and so as I was in London, (I just come up to apprentice my youngest, little Peter) I thought I would go as far as having a lawyer's opinion."

Ponsonby explained the course necessary to be pursued, which appearing to Mrs. Pratten like a wish to decline interfering, she looked a little nettled: "oh if

you don't like to undertake it, well and good; I thought being one of the family, as one may say, it would have been a mutual advantage; and I felt a pleasure in thinking I should have it in my power to throw a little business in your way."

While Ponsonby was pointing out to Mrs. Pratten the proper channel through which her claim should be prosecuted, Mrs. Edward Meredith was expressing her foolish wonder at every thing she had seen in London; but she had not yet seen the docks, she said; she wished so much to see the docks: they had very fine docks at *Leverpool*; but she had been told she must see the London docks: she would rather see the docks than any thing.

" All in good time, cousin," said the bride-maid: " you see Ma'am" continued she, turning to Mrs. Philip Ponsonby, " Mrs. Eddurd is quite a stranger in Lon-

don, so every thing is new to her; now I've been here before, many's the time and oft; and I can't say all these shows and sights that they are going to see day after day, have any charms for me. I'm very fond of *reading*; I quite *devour* books; and when I get to my studies after breakfast, I "take no note of time," as the poet says; and then it's very tantalizing to be called away to go and see the wax-works and such-like. You can feel for me, Ma'am, for I understand you are a bookish lady: for my part, I think it is infinitely the most rational way of employing one's time; I'm very fond of reading, always was, from a child."

"Yes," said Mrs. Edward Meredith, "cousin Popjoy could repeat a long piece of poetry, when she was only five years old; what was it, cousin? something about *appy, appy, appy pair*—"

“ Halexander’s Feast, you mean;” cried Miss Popjoy: “ yes, to be sure, I have an extraordinary memory; and I’ve lately improved it by studying Mnemonics. I square this room,—and am ready to answer any chronological question:—it’s a wonderful advantage!”

“ I only wish I had half your learning, cousin Popjoy. She can write poetry Ma’am! and some of hers is in print!”

“ Hush, hush, Mrs. Eddurd; only little fugitive pieces, Ma’am, in the magazines and ladies’ pocket-books; merely a trifling recreation; but I have, to be sure, written some things of a little more consequence:—you may perhaps have met with a Treatise on Society, and the influence of the Fine Harts; and a few Hessays;—but I don’t put my name to them;---‘ a deed without a name,’ as the poet says.”

Mrs. Edward Meredith was now absorbed

in taking a survey of the room; and as she twisted and craned her neck to catch a view of every object, her admiration unconsciously became slightly audible: "pretty carpet,---beautiful glasses,---chandelier,---blue curtains,---pretty chairs,---pretty little stool, pretty roses and greeenum." Two or three gentlemen (visitors to Frederick) were relating anecdotes with great earnestness about their dogs.

"Docks!" cried Mrs. Meredith, roused from her reverie, "Docks! what docks are those gentlemen speaking of? Are they going to see the docks? I could go with them, couldn't I?"

"No, no, *dogs*, Mrs. Eddurd;" cried Popjoy; "*dogs*, Mrs. Eddurd:---curious *hequivoque*!"

Elizabeth, with harrowed feelings at the idea of what Mrs. Philip Ponsonby was

thinking of all this, had been obliged to attend to some family communication from her brother. She was glad to perceive that his manner was improved; though he cut but a poor figure when he addressed Mrs. Ponsonby. He still wanted the ease of a gentleman; while occasional abrupt efforts to appear dashing, made his *mauvaise honte* more conspicuous. Elizabeth shrunk from Mrs. Pratten; but there was no escaping her Swansea news: how Mrs. Meredith had been plagued about old Thomas, and that they weren't going to keep a man servant any more, she believed.---How Mrs. William Meredith had quarrelled with Mrs. Jones:---that Mr. Jones was got very deaf.---How shameful Dick Pratten had behaved to his father; and that Mr. John Barton led him and Jem into all sorts of mischief.---That Mrs. Mainwaring had terrible swelled legs;---and that Becky Dowling had been like to make a foolish match, which Mrs.

Pratten's judicious interference had prevented.

When the party was gone, Elizabeth's consternation was still at its meridian. She was alone with Mrs. Philip Ponsonby: could she meet her eye?---What was to be said? Who was to speak first?---To talk on indifferent subjects would appear unnatural; silence was an awkward alternative, and she precipitately retired to her own room.

The gaieties of town were so counterbalanced by these mortifications, that Elizabeth looked forwards with some degree of comfort to her return to Woodsbourne: and by the time Mrs. Clements had discovered her residence, she was many miles from London; so that Lady Kingsbury's and Mrs. Sunderland's chance of partaking of Mrs. Clement's entertainments became very problematical.

CHAP. XIII.

MARIA had been in Mrs. Clements' family several months, and had experienced the greatest kindness from them, when she received so distressing an account of her father's illness, that she could no longer make her mind easy without going to see him.

Mrs. Clements was quite shocked at the idea of her travelling in a stage-coach without the protection of a gentle-

man, but Maria was too much afflicted to give the circumstance a moment's consideration, though she was glad to find that a respectable looking female was to be her fellow-traveller. This proved to be a very loquacious old gentlewoman, who began letting her companions understand that she was in the family of General Montgomery. "You see," continued Mrs. Chapman, "they are gone down to Tenby, so the servants are to follow as well as they can. Now, where I lived last, there was always a travelling carriage for the upper servants. That was at Lord Courtington's. To be sure, Mrs. Montgomery has her maid with her; ah! and I'd bet you any money you wouldn't know which was the lady, and which the maid; nay, for the matter of that, 'tis my opinion, that nine out of ten would take Mrs. Radford for my lady. I never see such a dresser, not I, in all the places I ever was in. I was twelve years house-

keeper at Lord Courtington's, and before that I lived at old Sir John Warre's."

"At Pendenna," said Maria.

"What, have you ever been there, Miss? that's a pretty place; but 'twas at Stokeleigh-house, in Devonshire, where Sir John kept up such state; yes, he spent a mint of money! the sights of company they used to keep! and the dinners that went on day after day. I do mind there was at one time my Lord Dulverton, Sir Charles and Lady Kemyss, and Colonel Kemyss, Mr. and Mrs. Collins of Cholwood, and the two Judges: yes: then the number of servants there was of all sorts, you know; to be sure what racketting there have gone on in that servants hall, and the waste of strong-beer! Oh, the wickedness I've seen in that house, and the extravagance that went on, high and low, like master

like man ; yes, people said it couldn't hold out long. Indeed at last it wouldn't, nor it didn't ; it couldn't. Then there was such a to-do ; my lady, she was in a peck of troubles, and master, he was obliged to make himself scarce : yes ; there was a great deal tried by Sir John's friends to settle his affairs, but 'twouldn't do ; and at last, sure enough, the estate was to be sold ; that was a grievous day : 'twas bad enough when the fine old trees were cut down ; I'm sure I thought my lady would have gone distracted ; but there, there was no help for it you see ; so, sure enough, Stokeleigh-house was sold ; yes, and then they went to live at Pendenna ; that was a place Sir John and his friends used to go to, just in the sporting season, you know ; but I'm told 'tis very much altered now, and made quite a handsome place ; but dear, 'twas no more to be compared to Stokeleigh than nothing at all ; that was a palace of

a house, and such beautiful furniture ! 'twould have done your heart good to see it ; but there, you see, what good was it to them, if they hadn't prudence to enjoy their fortune as they ought, but go squandering it away like nothing at all, setting bad examples to their dependants. Oh, the wickedness that went on there ! There was Mr. Francombe the butler, as bad a fellow, I do think, as ever the gallows was hungry for, yes ; and he was such a favourite with Sir John, he could do any thing : he was the ruin, I know, of an honest, sober lad, as lived near Stokeleigh. Mr. Francombe, you see, had quarrelled with one of the footmen, and got him turned off at a minute's warning ; so, what did he do, but purvailed on this young lad to take his place ; and, as he was a handy young fellow, Francombe soon taught him his business, and a great deal more, before he had done with him ; for when the family went to Lon'on, he

led him into all sorts of wickedness and bad company: at last, he left his place, and the next tidings I heard of him was, that he was transported for highway robbery: every body thought he would be hung, but, however, he was saved an ignomnious death. But there, you see, while some meet their deserts, others escape and prosper in their villany; yes; now, this Mr. Francombe, he went afterwards to be head-waiter at one of the great gaming-houses; and there he contrived, one way and another, we won't say how, to fill his pockets pretty handsomely; yes; I see him not long ago riding a fine horse; he doesn't chuse to know me, and indeed I shouldn't think a how dye do from him any such great honour, I can tell him: I'm sure I never see him but I think of poor Sam Dawson; yes; I recollect, too, as well as if 'twas but yesterday, when we heard that Stokeleigh was to be sold, how Francombe

went on cracking his jokes. Says he, 'Mrs. Chapman, you are always complaining of the racketting that's going on, and that you've no peace from morning to night ; so now,' says he, ' you'll have no call to complain ; you'll have *peace* enough, for 'tis all over with the *Warres*.' I thought 'twas so ungracious, you know. You see," continued Mrs. Chapman, " I've seen a great deal of the world one way and another ; for servants, you know, can see into things that other people don't. Why, I've lived in families where I've seen such doings as would quite surprise you, yes ; there was one place where I lived for a little time, where, as I may say, 'twas all shain. I don't chuse to mention names, but 'twas the most out-of-the-way sort of life I ever led. I was hired by a gentleman and lady who had just come to London from Brighton ; and they began dashing away in a fine style, yes ; things were carried on with a high

hand ; a handsome house, carriage, servants, service of plate, yes ; and they kept a deal of fine company. What's all this for, thought I ? for I heard they hadn't always lived in such a way. However, at last the story was out. A young gentleman of large fortune, you see, had paid some attentions to one of the daughters, so they followed him to London, and made parties at their house for him continivelly ; and sure enough he was caught at last. Then away went Master and Missus ; down went the carriage ; away went all the hired things ; and away went all the servants ! —

“ After that I lived with a young couple as married for love ; such love as *I* never seed in all my born days. They did nothing but quarrel from morning to night, while all their friends were crying 'em up as such a happy couple. To be sure, when any body was by, 'twas ‘ my love,’

this, and 'my dearest,' that, and 'you are such a coaxing angel;' but the moment they were left alone, they'd call one another all the ugly names in the world. I've heard him cuss her to her face, I have, yes.—Oh, this is where we stop to dine, I suppose."

Maria's mind had been too much occupied with the afflicting scenes she would have to encounter at home, to pay much attention to the communicative Mrs. Chapman. On hearing the Warre family named, it naturally attracted her attention, but she felt little interested in the details that followed: not so her fellow travellers, two facetious tradesmen, who were much amused with Mrs. Chapman's family secrets, and encouraged her loquacity.

At the inn where the travellers stopt to dine, they found their circle increased by

three or four outside-passengers, besides the company from another coach, who, according to the general custom, were all to sit down at the same table.

Two gentlemen, from the top of the other coach, stalked into the dining-room for a few minutes ; and, with the most insolent *sang froid*, regardless of the feelings of the company, began abusing the intended dinner arrangement.

“ Oh, d—n it,” cried one, “ this is too good a joke ; dine with the stage-coach passengers ! ha ! ha ! ha ! no, by — that won’t do : — Waiter ! shew us into another room.”

“ Pretty sort of gentlemen they be ! ” cried Mrs. Chapman ; “ where have they been to larn manners, I should be glad to know ? among grooms and stable-boys, I fancy. I’m sure if they see fit to go

outside a stage coach, they didn't be afeard to sit down with them of the *inside* ; but, for my part, I am glad they're gone ; a couple of swearers!"

" The tallest of them, I believe, drove the coach the last stage," observed one of Maria's fellow-passengers ; " I fancy he's what's called ' Bang-up-prime.' "

" Bang-up indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Chapman ; " *I* think he's *craz'd*. I seed'n just now swaggering at the door, asking for a flannel under-waistcoat, or a glass of thunder and lightening ; a profane rebel! I'm sure when *I* sees such gentlemen as that, *I* always fancy they've no talents for *high* company, so they contents themselves with being king of the *low*!"

The dinner now made its appearance. A very small piece of salmon, garnished

with a few thin fried soles, took its station at the top ; in the centre, a boiled neck of mutton, and at the bottom an enormous loin of veal. The salmon went but a very little way, and Mr. Budden, the gentleman who headed the table, seemed in a fretful temper at being obliged to serve the dish before him, without a chance of reserving a portion for himself. The mutton had been boiled till the white bones started from the meat ; the veal was throughout of a decided pink hue : on one side were some greens, which had just been dipped in hot water, while the potatoes on the other side appeared to have been thoroughly soaked.

As great dissatisfaction prevailed at this repast, an imperious demand for "something that could be eaten," was answered by the appearance of the giant remains of a roasted sirloin of beef, and an uncouth fragment of a venison pasty.

When the cheese was put down, Mr. Martin inquired whether there were no fruit pies? "Certainly, Sir," said the waiter, who nimbly left the room, and returned with a small apple-pie, with a covering of paste, resembling putty; but however untempting this dainty appeared, Mr. Martin, having ascertained that there would be nothing extray to pay, began a serious attack upon it; and, on helping his friend, he inquired whether he liked much of the "duff."

As the beer met with general censure, a few of the company chose brandy and water. Wine was proposed by Mr. Budden, but the motion was not seconded. They had scarcely finished their comfortless repast, before they were summoned to proceed on their journey. The reckoning, however, had first to be settled. This occasioned new delays. The bill was brought to Mr. Budden, who divided the

amount, and informed the company what each was to pay.

“ Please to let me look at the bill,” cried a Mr. Sims; “ you see, Sir, the brandy is included in this here bill; and you will please to observe that **I** had no brandy.”

“ Oh, trifling nonsense,” cried Mr. Budden.

“ Trifle, or no trifle, Sir,” dispassionately remonstrated Mr. Sims; “ I don’t care; **I** had no brandy, nor no brandy will **I** pay for.”

“ No more hadn’t **I** any brandy,” cried another.

“ Give me the bill then,” said Mr. Budden, pettishly; “ there’s more fuss than enough about it.”

“ ‘Tisn’t me that makes any fuss, Sir,” returned Mr. Sims, calmly; “ I always pays for what I has; and therefore I don’t see no reason why I should pay for what I hasn’t had; that’s my principles: I pays every body honestly, and I expects honest treatment in return: I wants nothing but what is fair and right between man and man.”

“ There Sir,” cried Mr. Budden, jerking a sixpence on the table; “ there’s all the difference in this mighty business, which I am very well satisfied to pay, and have done with this harangue.”

“ It’s no favour to me, Sir,” returned Mr. Sims; “ you’ll please to understand I don’t consider it any: as I said before, I pays for what I has, but as for paying for what I hasn’t had—”

The coachman interrupted any further

discussion ; and the company proceeded to their respective coaches. Maria, Mrs. Chapman, and Mr. Martin were already seated, when some further delay was occasioned by Mr. Robbins's missing his hat, and suspecting Mr. Martin had secreted it, he insisted on his telling where it was.

“ Lor, how should *I* know : look about, can’t’*e*, or send your eyes on a post-horse after it.”

“ Come you’d better tell now, you fellow, you : I’ll wring your nose off if you don’t.”

“ I’ll kill’*e*, if you dare.”

“ You’ll be hang’d then.”

“ No, I shouldn’t ; a man isn’t hang’d for killing varmint.”

“ Come, let’s have none of your sauce ; you haven’t had your belly-full, I fancy ; I shall come and give you a taste of some fisty-cuff presently—”

“ What shall I be doing the while, eh ? I’ve a notion I should make you grumble in your bread-basket.”

“ Oh, will’ e. ; we shall soon see that.”

“ Come, we can’t wait all day, Bob ; never mind your hat ; you won’t take cold with that thick scull of yours.”

“ You’d better be quiet, now, Master Johnny ; I shall certainly play you some trick you won’t like : where’s my hat, I say ?”

“ Why, where it ought to be, in its place to be sure,” said Martin, slyly drawing the hat from its concealment, and placing it on the vacant seat ; “ and where you’d

have found it, if you had a grain of sense in that addle pate of yours."

" You'll be a boy all the days of your life, Martin," said Robbins, getting into the coach, and putting his hat on ; " there's no sense in it, as I can see."

" No more can I ; there's only a numscull in it. I say, Bob, when do you mean to set the Thames on fire?"

" Why, when you turn gentleman."

" Well, I'm glad we're set off at last," cried Mrs. Chapman ; I thought we should have staid there all day,—one thing and t'other."

The behaviour of the different persons they had just parted from, for some time occupied the attention of Maria's fellow-travellers. The first gentleman's

seat that appeared in sight, turned the current of the conversation; and, by a natural association of ideas, reminded Mrs. Chapman of the different families she had lived in.

“ Yes, Pendenna is a nice place,” said Mrs. Chapman, though nothing had been then said which referred to it; but it was a way of soliciting Maria’s attention:—“ Pendenna is a nice place; yes: and I hear the family live in a very handsome way now. I am acquainted with Bevan; she’s housekeeper to Mrs. Bolingbroke of Llanwyllan, and so ’tis natural, you know, one should like to hear a little about a family where one has lived; and I find they keep quite a reg’lar establishment, yes; *this* Lady Warre, you see, brought Sir George a handsome fortune, so ’tis but right that she should have every thing handsome about her; they *do* say, though, she’s but a queerish sort of temper. I

suppose 'tis pretty much the case, for she's for ever changing her servants. There was a governess there, Mrs. Bevan said, as led a terrible life of it. She couldn't think, for her part, how she could put up with it all ; and there 'twas said, a relation of Mrs. Bolingbroke's fell in love with her ; so that wouldn't go down at all with Mrs. Bolingbroke, for she have a deadly deal of pride ; and so I hear she have done every thing in her power to put a stop to it all ; but, dear heart, I don't like such meddling people, not I ; do you, Miss ?”

“ I have no doubt,” said Maria, “ Mrs. Bolingbroke had very good reasons for what she did.”

“ Her reason was, you know, because she wanted him to marry Miss Estcourt ; but that'll never be, I can tell her. I know pretty well Miss Estcourt likes

somebody else ; one as she has known ever so long ; and I fancy 'tis all settled now ; yes."

Maria felt that it must be perfectly immaterial to her, whether the proposed match between George Worthington and Miss Estcourt had been broken off or not. His conduct in the last interviews she had had with him, had been such, as to afford her little ground for supposing he retained any of that regard, which, at one period, she had been tempted to believe he had entertained for her.

CHAP. XIV.

As Maria approached the end of her journey, her anxiety on her father's account increased. She avoided the sight of the house, dreading to encounter some sign that might denote that her beloved parent was no more. On her arrival at the door, she rushed into the house, and, with trembling apprehension, waited her mother's coming. This distressing interval was relieved by the comforting intelligence, that her father was better, though still not out of danger.

Maria had now the satisfaction of sharing, with her mother, the charge of attending him by day, and of sitting up with him at night; and with the most tender anxiety she watched every turn of his disorder. To the great joy of his family Mr. Shirley began to shew symptoms of amendment; and in a few days after Maria's arrival, he was pronounced out of danger.

Having for some time past given up his school, Mr. Shirley was reduced to very narrow circumstances; and Maria experienced the most pure delight in contributing her little savings to his comfort, and had the gratification of seeing him daily gain strength.

Maria had received a very kind letter from Mrs. Clements, begging her not to hurry her return; but as her father's health was now so nearly re-established,

she had written her in reply, naming the day when she proposed leaving Aberfowey.

The time when Maria was again to quit her paternal roof was near at hand, when on returning from a walk with her father, she perceived a gentleman proceeding towards the house. On a nearer approach, she was certain it was George Worthington: he also perceived Maria and her father, and hastened to meet them.

After the first greetings had passed, George apologized to Maria for having omitted to send for her letter agreeably to his promise. On his return to town, he informed her, after his interview with her at Brompton, he found an express had just arrived from Bolingbroke Court, with the intelligence that his grandfather had had a paralytic stroke, and that he was consi-

dered in a very alarming state. George lost not a moment in hastening to see him, and his mother followed the next day: they found him in imminent danger: he was just sensible enough to know that they were near him, and to express his satisfaction, when he was seized with another attack more violent than the first, which he survived but two days. Mrs. Worthington continued at Bolingbroke Court; but Mr. Bolingbroke's affairs required George's presence in London, and had since entirely occupied his time.

Agreeably to his grandfather's will, George now assumed the name of Bolingbroke, and came into possession of a very large property. The scenes he had lately witnessed, gave a more thoughtful turn to his mind, and the seclusion of Aberfowey seemed peculiarly to harmonize with his feelings. The walks, the society, recalled the pleasures of his early youth; and the

image of Maria was associated with them all. He had intended to have stayed but a day or two at Aberfowey ; but day after day he prolonged his departure, till he felt it impossible to leave a spot that contained the woman he loved. In their daily intercourse, a mutual confidence in each other's affection, had dissipated every doubt. George well remembered his parting words, when he left Aberfowey : the intervening time appeared like a dream. He reflected on the choice his brother had made, and the fatal consequences that had attended it. His large fortune could afford him no enjoyment, without sharing it with the amiable Maria, and he now no longer delayed the avowal of his affection.

Mr. Shirley was totally unprepared for such a proposal ; and though highly gratified at the flattering prospect of happiness, which such a union promised to his

daughter, he was anxious, before he gave his unqualified approbation, that Mrs. Worthington's consent should be obtained.

George immediately wrote to his mother on the subject, and with all the impatience of youth expected a letter by the very next post; but a week elapsed before her answer arrived.

Mrs. Worthington felt greatly disappointed at the connexion which her son had in view; but her own marriage precluded her from urging any serious objection against unequal matches; and her letter, without expressing either satisfaction or regret, contained a negative assent. This point being gained, it was settled that the marriage should take place as soon as the necessary arrangements could be made.

In the mean time Mrs. and Miss Wor-

thington returned to London, where the impressions of the melancholy scene they had so lately quitted, were soon effaced by the gaieties of the circle they now joined. The most splendid fêtes succeeded each other without intermission. Ellen Worthington was a beauty in the fashionable world ; and the report of the large fortune left her by Mr. Bolingbroke more than doubled the number of her admirers : she had too much sense however, not to weigh their respective merits.

Mr. Estcourt was gentlemanly in his manners, of good family, and heir to a large estate contiguous to the Bolingbroke domains ; but his countenance was not prepossessing ; his disposition was cynical and capricious, and his attentions to Miss Worthington appeared to result more from family arrangement than a decided preference.

Lord Valentine Lee was handsome, good-tempered, and lively, but frivolous and affected : the fashion of his snuff and of his snuff-box, were with *him* matters of the first importance : his Lordship's dress was the standard of the reigning costume : if the shape of the boot was argued, Lord Valentine was appealed to ; if the cut of the coat was the point in dispute, Lord Valentine's decree laid the question at rest : he was nevertheless a favorite at all parties, being a professed drawing-room ornament, and one of the best waltzers in town.

Colonel Damer was a man of captivating manners, with a cultivated taste for literature. He had seen a great deal of the world ; and in the most agreeable manner dispensed the information he possessed ; but these recommendations were tarnished by his passion for gaming, which

it was now understood had left him but a small portion of his once ample fortune. Miss Worthington had known him for some time previously to her grandfather's death ; but he had then paid her no particular marks of attention. The fortune she now possessed, was the cause of his present addresses, and Ellen could not but appreciate his motive.

Sir Ralph Skyring was acknowledged to be one of the most distinguished whips of the day. He had nearly arrived at the height of his ambition : he possessed " the handsomest dogs, and the handsomest horses in Christendom ;" every thing he had was " the best," and he only wanted the handsomest woman for a wife, to make his possessions complete. He fell in love with Ellen Worthington at a race ball, and sought to engage her affections by entering into a minute description

of the beauties and genealogy of his Tipitiwitchet.

None of these could obtain any interest in Ellen's heart: but opposed to the somewhat capricious attentions of Mr. Estcourt, were the persevering assiduities of Mr. Pemberton, a young man of good connexions, and considerable fortune; elegant in his person and agreeable in his manners. Every interview tended to establish her regard, when a circumstance was mentioned to her, which influenced her decision. Mr. Irby, who had just married a particular friend of Ellen's, happened to be in company with Pemberton when he first saw Miss Worthington. "Irby," said he, "you have often rallied me upon my threatening to marry, and never carrying my threat into execution: now, mark me; that's Mrs. Pemberton." Major Fitzjames, who was with him, cau-

tioned him not to lose his heart irrecoverably, as he believed he might venture to assure him that the lady was bespoke. Pemberton, however, by no means lowered his tone: he repeated "that's Mrs. Pemberton," and offered to support his assertion by a bet.

"I wont rob you in that way," said Fitzjames, "you are sure to lose."

"If that's the case," cried Sir Charles Fleming, "you shall not be disappointed of your bet, Pemberton: I'll take the odds."

"Done—done," cried Pemberton, "I'll be introduced to her this evening, and in six weeks she's Mrs. Pemberton."

CHAP. XV.

THE continual dissipation in which Ellen was involved, began to have a prejudicial effect upon her health, and change of air was recommended. Ellen was for Brighton ; but her advisers suggested that a retired place would conduce more to her recovery, and an invitation was accepted from Mrs. Irby, who was at her seat in Berkshire.

“ Welcome, my dear, to Wilford House or Wilford Lodge, cried Mrs. Irby ; “ for

I don't know yet how to designate it. There has been a dispute it seems, ever since the mansion was built, between the Irbys and the Grosettes, whether their house or this, was entitled to the distinction of Wilford House. The villagers keep neuter, and call Mr. Grosette's, the great white house, and this, the great brick house! Can any thing be so horrid. Do walk out, and take a survey of the front: now don't look back till I bring you to a favorable spot:—there! did you ever see any thing so tremendously frightful; it looks like a great town-house conveyed here by magic; you can't say *tis rus in urbe*, Edward; but you might very well inscribe over your door *urbe in rus.*"

" You had better not meddle with Latin, Fanny, you'll only make blunders."

" And 'twould be a pity," said Mrs. Irby,

“ to add any to a place so plentifully supplied ;—this is the house, Ellen, that I heard so much of. I expected a delightful seat like Mr. Germaine’s.”

“ I said it was a good family house,” retorted Mr. Irby, “ and I say so still. You could not suppose it to be like Belvidere, for I told you it was an old mansion house.”

“ But the misfortune is, it is not quite old enough ! it is neither modern nor ancient ; it was built by his grandfather, Ellen, who spared no expence about it, as it was intended to last for ever ;—there, you see in the centre, at the top, are the family arms, with a large ball at each corner ! so classical !”

Mr. Irby insisted that it was a respectable looking gentleman’s house.

Mrs. Irby contended that it was any

thing but a gentleman's house ; it was like an hotel, or a hospital, or a great school ! indeed she thought the tall gateway admirably calculated to support a semicircular board, with "Academy for young gentlemen," in gold letters. She thought it would be wrong not to dispose of it for one of those purposes, particularly as she so much disliked the house ; indeed she doubted whether she could exist in it.

He thought it would be as well to make the experiment ; he had no fears about the result ; his family had lived in it, and had found it a very comfortable residence, and he saw no reason why it should not be considered so still.

"But every thing about it is so deplorably out of taste," cried Mrs. Irby : "in front, a square strait lawn ; I wonder the villagers don't petition to play at bowls

here. Really if it is to remain as it is, a bench, with a few rustics smoking, and others at play, would quite enliven the scene. For my part, I can conceive no beauty in a perfect flat. I have ventured to recommend that the two adjoining fields should be thrown open, and the lawn converted into hill and dale, and planted."

"Yes, you want to turn it into a park ; but I don't choose any thing so ridiculous. I like to be consistent : it never was meant to ape a nobleman's residence, and I don't intend that it ever shall."

"I should think you need be under no apprehensions on that head ; such ample precautions seem to have been used."

"Mr. Irby," said Ellen, "may not like to adopt the whole of your proposed alterations ; but I've no doubt he will con-

sent to some improvements. If that wall now, at the end of the lawn, were removed, I should think it a great advantage : you would gain a view of the river."

" Ah, but my dear, that wall has the merit of supporting a worthy old pear tree, and Mr. Irby unfortunately recollects, when he was a little boy of four years old, eating these pears, and thinking them the most delicious in the world !"

" But this tall evergreen hedge does not bear fruit," said Ellen ; " Mr. Irby will, I dare say, allow some of it to be cleared away."

" Mr. Irby says it always has been there, which I presume is to be considered as a very sufficient reason for its continuance."

“ It would not be very wise, I think,” observed Mr. Irby, “ precipitately to remove what could not be easily replaced. I said it had always been found of great service in screening the house from the easterly winds.”

For the same good reason, Mrs. Irby supposed, it had been kept clipped ; she wondered he did not convert it into a procession of ducks and ducklings ! though for her part, she thought it would be but charitable to allow the poor shrubs to stretch themselves a little in their natural form. “ But Ellen,” continued Mrs. Irby, “ you have not yet seen the pride of the place ; the alcove !—what a treasure for a tea-garden ! Did you ever see such a quaint little building, with a tiny peep-hole of a window at the back ! But come, let us return to the house, and enjoy its internal comforts ; windows breast-high, and huge

projecting fire-places, with chimney-pieces, which there's no chance of reaching without a ladder."

The drawing-room was a handsome large room ; but it was wainscoted, and was up-stairs ; for the sake, Mrs. Irby presumed, of the prospect. She believed in a clear day the spires of two or three distant country churches might be discerned, and the wind-mill at Ruddleton ; but in her opinion these advantages were a little outweighed by a villainous manufactory in the fore-ground : trees, she observed, were planted to hide it, and probably would, when the present and succeeding generations were in their graves.

" Well, you may say what you please, Fanny," said Mr. Irby ; " but it's a very comfortable house ; large spacious rooms, with every convenience, and when there's new furniture—"

“ Oh I beg every thing may remain as it is : the furniture is quite in character with the place ; and I should be very sorry to have any hand in disturbing the consistency of this substantial mansion-house. New furniture would make it look like an owl in regiments !”

Mr. and Mrs. Irby had been acquainted about three months previously to their marriage. He was in the habits of intimacy with Sir John and Lady Boswell, at whose continual dinner parties he was a favourite guest. By degrees he began to discover that there was a pretty, lively Miss Poyntz on a visit at the house ; and at length these good dinners and Miss Poyntz, became so inseparably associated in his mind, that he never thought of the one without the other : his affections seemed equally divided between them,

and as his attachment to good eating could not be disputed, it might reasonably be inferred, that Miss Poyntz possessed as large a share of his heart, as it was possible for him to bestow.

Mr. Irby was between thirty and forty: he was a man of fashion, and had a very good fortune. Miss Poyntz had also a good fortune: she was about twenty, was fashionable and accomplished. They never met but in pleasant parties and in pleasant tempers; and as Lady Boswell had assured Miss Poyntz that it would be a most eligible match, there appeared to be no reason why she should not accept him.

Miss Poyntz as an only child, had been accustomed to much indulgence; and as Mr. Irby was of an indolent disposition, she had calculated on enjoying a great deal of her own way. She found, how-

ever, that he had a will of his own ; that there were points on which he could not be moved ; and to make amends for her deficiency of authority, she amused herself in ridiculing what she had not influence enough to alter.

At dinner, Mr. Irby viewed the various dishes before him with a critical eye ; and after tasting several of them, still seemed undecided and dissatisfied.

“ I hope, Miss Worthington,” said he, “ you will find something you like ; I’m concerned to say there’s nothing I can recommend. I don’t know how it is, but at our house there’s nothing so well dressed as one meets with elsewhere :—there must be want of management somewhere.”

“ I suppose there is,” said Mrs. Irby coolly ; “ but I rather imagine it rests with the excellent good cook you hired.”

He told me, Ellen, she had lived ten years in an alderman's family, and was a perfect mistress of her art. I'm quite in the dark as to the present grievance; one might endeavour to prevent its recurrence, if he would condescend to unburthen his mind. For my part, I see nothing to prevent my making a very good dinner."

Mr. Irby found fault with the sauces and ragouts; the wine was added too late, or the flavors were not properly varied: in one, the receipt for which he had written out himself, he complained of the omission of currie; and in another, where it ought not to be, he discovered the flavor; he could not be mistaken; he was certain he could detect the smallest grain. The fricassee was quite spoilt, owing to the want of cayenne, and the preponderance of mace. "It's a very strange thing," he continued, "that we never

have a chicken pie, though I've spoken about it once or twice."

"I certainly will take care that you shall have this dainty to-morrow," said Mrs. Irby; "the chickens are all ready to be killed; it's no odds to me how they are dressed, and I don't suppose it will make *much* difference to *them*. Would you wish to have this chicken-pie as a constant dish, every day, or every other day, or only once a week. I presume the edict respecting the mace and cayenne is to extend to the pie. I trust nothing will occur to mar the accomplishment of this affair. I'll change my ring as a memento. Oh, that has been done already. What was it for? let me consider.—Oh, I'm to call on Mrs. Cranitch: I know I shall dislike her so! Well, you need not shake your head: I mean to go. She was the daughter of an upholsterer, was'nt she, eh? but it seems the Irbys have al-

ways visited her, so I'm to act the condescending lady. I wish she was not so ugly ; I saw her at church, and all her frightful progeny : her husband was a phenomenon of ugliness ; and I'm told an admirable likeness of him is preserved in the most hideous of the sons."

" You quite alarm me," said Ellen ; " but I hope you have some pleasant neighbours to make amends."

" We don't shine much at present," returned Mrs. Irby, " though I understand some very agreeable families are expected soon. I won't insist on terrifying you with the sight of these Cranitches to-morrow ; and you may think yourself lucky in escaping a visit I had to pay Mrs. Bradbury last week. She *would* take me all over her grounds, and not only that, but into her poultry yard. During our progress, she made an ample

display of her good management, and had something to say to all her people that happened to come in her way:— 'twas I *won't* have this; and I *will* have that; then I was dragged through a paddock to see a new dairy. Then Mrs. Bradbury began vociferating in *alto* to a man half a mile off: "Here, Richard Higgins! how came these hurdles to be moved, I say? the white cow has got out here into the lower field!" So then she took up a long stick, and began, "hoy! hoy!"—Moo! moo! replied the cow, without moving an inch."

"Well," said Mr. Irby, laughing, "she's a very clever woman; and, since Mr. Bradbury's death, she has entirely managed the estate herself."

"Oh, I've no doubt of her management; but, with all her cleverness, things seemed unfortunately to go wrong. The

net had not been put over the cherry-tree ; why was the wood brought through the flower-garden ? She wouldn't have it done : the door should be kept locked. Then she made a great fuss about the little turkies ; and all this time, I suppose, she thought I was envying her astonishing talents ;—so annoying ! Then she began asking me what Mr. Irby thought of the new inclosure bill."

" Yes," interrupted Mr. Irby ; " and that bothering fellow, Parker, was here this morning,—the most indefatigable man in the whole county. He imagines, I fancy, nothing can be done without him. He's continually complaining of having his hands so full of business, and yet is always ready to engage in any new undertaking. He is for ever riding about the country, and comes here plaguing me about the inclosures, and the roads, and

the turnpikes, and repairing the bridge, and pressing me to attend the meetings!"

"A busy meddling fellow!" cried Mrs. Irby; "he never comes here but he thinks it necessary to give directions to some of our people: a servant came to me the other day with Squire Parker's compliments, and that we ought to cut the grass; so troublesome! When he first called, I took him for a bailiff, scraping me a low bow, with "servant Ma'am—" there! now I've thrown the wine over my new dress."

"It's no great matter," said Mr. Irby, "it's a very ugly one; and I do hope, Fanny, when we dine at Lord Kingsbury's you'll wear something a little smarter than what you had on at the Grossettes'; I was quite ashamed of you; you really looked dowdy."

“ What a pretty speech!” cried Mrs. Irby; “ if you’re so lavish of your compliments now, by the time we have been married a year, you’ll be quite at a loss what to favour me with. I really did not know that I was such an object. I flattered myself that I dressed with considerable taste; but I find it was all a mistake. I know nothing of the matter. The next time I have a gown, I shall certainly beg you will attend a consultation with my dress-maker.”

“ Pshaw, Fanny! how your tongue runs on!”

“ It would be marvellous indeed,” retorted Mrs. Irby, “ for a *lady* to be silent when she hears herself abused.”

CHAP. XVI.

THESE little altercations, which were continually occurring, made Ellen feel her situation rather uncomfortable, when several families, arriving in the neighbourhood, a good deal of visiting ensued. The regular hours of a country life had had a most salutary effect on her health; and she accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Irby to dine at Lord Kingsbury's, about seven miles from Wilford-house.

'Two or three gentlemen's seats appeared in the vicinity of Sherbridge-park,

one of which she particularly admired for its beautiful situation, and the tasteful style of the building.

“ It belongs to a Mr. Mortimer,” said Mr. Irby; “ he has lately purchased it; but I believe he has not yet come to reside in it: it’s a remarkably elegant style of house.”

“ Yes,” said Mrs. Irby, “ you certainly have a discernment for what is elegant, though I can’t persuade you that your own house is the very reverse. It’s quite mortifying to be surrounded on all sides by such a variety of charming houses: the contrast is so glaring!”

This threatened to disturb the harmony that had prevailed during the drive; but the carriage now entering Sherbridge-park, their attention was occupied by its picturesque scenery.

Lady Kingsbury received them ; and, on their inquiring after his Lordship, she observed, he was shewing Mr. Mortimer the grounds. “ He is lately come to Elmwood, and we find him a most agreeable addition to our society.”

The gentlemen were now approaching the house. Mrs. Irby, who sat near the window, noticed Mr. Mortimer’s prepossessing appearance, and lady Kingsbury spoke of him as a very superior young man.

Ellen’s curiosity was a little excited to see this very handsome and very agreeable man ; and in a few minutes Lord Kingsbury entered, and introduced Mr. Mortimer. Ellen was never more surprized ; it was Henry Maitland she beheld ; and she now remembered her brother’s giving her an account of his changing his name.

Henry too was surprised, and felt some degree of agitation on seeing Ellen Worthington. Their last interview was painfully impressed on his mind, and he made no effort to ingratiate himself. Ellen felt this ; she felt too that she had slighted him ; and that he must have been offended. She was ashamed of her conduct. Was she justified, because she was surrounded by men of rank and fashion, in betraying hauteur towards one whom she might imagine of inferior consequence ? Was it the raillery of a few coxcombs she feared ? What was the value of their opinion, compared to the approbation of her own heart !

Ellen had witnessed with regret the matrimonial disputes between Mr. and Mrs. Irby, and was sensible that other recommendations, besides the character of fashion, were necessary to contribute to domestic happiness. Were these to be

found in any of those for whom she had slighted Mr. Mortimer? She recollects a variety of traits in his early youth, evincing the goodness of his heart; and she now could not sufficiently condemn herself for her reprehensible behaviour. She wished to adopt a different line of conduct; but felt deterred from shewing any marked conciliatory advances, lest he should attribute them to the different situation in which he now appeared.

Mr. Irby was much pleased with his new acquaintance; and in a few days called at Elmwood, and invited Henry to Wilford-house. A friendly intercourse was soon established between the gentlemen; but as it seemed to be an understood compact between Mr. and Mrs. Irby, that what pleased the one, should be disapproved by the other, Mrs. Irby thought fit to take up a prejudice against Henry. She was certain she should not

like him. He was very handsome, she allowed, but there was too much of the *Penseroso* about him ; she had no doubt of his being very amiable and very clever, but he was too 'good for her by half ; she supposed he set up for Sir Charles Grandison, or was enacting Cœlebs ; she thought those sort of persons always made parties dull. However, as Mr. Irby had taken such a fancy to him, 'twas quite lucky that Captain Flanigan was come to the *Grosettes'*, as his gaiety would make ample amends.

This Captain Flanigan could conjure with cards, and was expert with the cups and balls ; performed extraordinary feats of activity in leaping over tables and chairs, and running round the room on the subbase ; he could stand on his head, walk on his hands, eat a wine glass, &c. &c.

Mrs. Irby had given him a general in-

vitation to the house, she said. Nothing could be so fortunate as to meet with some pleasant person in the country who could always do something to amuse: it was impossible to be in Flanigan's company a minute without dying of laughter.

Mr. Irby thought Captain Flanigan ought to be infinitely obliged for the character she had given him; he was sure it would secure him a scaramouch-appointment at one of the little theatres. Mrs. Irby, he observed, might certainly have the Captain to laugh at, if she thought proper; though he should have supposed, a lady of her discernment, would have preferred the society of a man of Mr. Mortimer's superior understanding, to the buffoonery of one who seemed threatening to become a formidable rival to the Indian jugglers.

The coolness which had at first appeared between Henry and Ellen, soon

gave way to a more social disposition. He was often invited to the house, but was always sure to find Captain Flanigan and some of the **Grosettes** there.

Henry's conversation was distinguished by a highly cultivated literary taste, and enlivened by a variety of entertaining anecdotes ; but a diffidence natural to real merit, restrained him from advancing his observations in company where he was not much known : it required some little time to draw him out. Captain Flanigan, on the contrary, had all his amusing qualities ready at a moment's notice ; and constantly hit upon something to give an interest and spirit to whatever amusement was going on. If he joined a walking party, he would start a race with the **Grosettes**, or some whimsical or perilous exploit. If dancing was proposed, no such thing as a country-dance was thought of, Captain Flanigan could

dance a hornpipe, the bolero, or fandango. He was the life of cotillons, reels, and strathspeys ; and was equally at home in the German, French, or Spanish waltz. If a new play was produced, he would read the different parts; with imitations of all the popular actors ; if singing was the order of the day, his comic songs ‘set the table in a roar.’ To these companionable qualifications he added a natural vein of original humour and unbounded good temper. However ridiculous he made himself, it was impossible not to give him credit for the pleasantry that prevailed ; while Henry, with all his sterling good qualities, was thrown in the back ground.

Henry had not been at Wilford-house for more than a week. He had been invited to a dinner-party ; but he was engaged at Sherbridge-park, and it was understood that a sister of Lady Kings-

bury was on a visit there. Lady Kingsbury was one of the daughters of Mr. Ponsonby of Woodsbourne. Ellen had occasionally seen the Miss Ponsonbys in town, but she was not acquainted with them; and the Irbys were not on an intimate footing with the Kingsbury family. Octavia Ponsonby, who was now at Sherbridge-park, though not decidedly handsome, possessed a very agreeable countenance, an elegant figure, and was highly accomplished. Ellen could not but acknowledge that she was every way deserving of Henry; and, as he had been so long a stranger at Wilford-house, she could not help attributing it, to the attractions he found at Sherbridge-park..

Mrs. Irby had become very intimate with the Grosettes, and they frequently spent evenings together in a free and sociable manner. At one of these parties, Henry was invited to Wilford house: he

came after all the rest of the company had been long assembled ; Mrs. Irby had called Captain Flanigan into action, and Ellen had unwillingly been persuaded to stand up with him, while he exhibited the evolutions of a Spanish waltz.

Ellen, whose esteem for Henry had begun to assume a more tender character, fearing he might not approve of the dance in which she was engaged, made a pretence of being tired, almost immediately on his being announced, and returned to her seat. Henry was standing at a little distance from her, speaking to Mrs. Grosette, who was making inquiries about Lady Kingsbury and her sister, and the parties at Sherbridge-park.

Henry spoke in raptures of their music parties, and remarked that Lady Kingsbury and Miss Ponsonby were possessed of the first-rate musical talents.

“ But you have dancing there sometimes, I suppose ; does Miss Ponsonby waltz ?”

“ No ; she never waltzes,” was Henry’s reply.

Ellen longed to tell him that she had stood up with Captain Flanigan much against her will ; that she had yielded to the persuasions of the company, rather than prevent Captain Flanigan’s exhibition, which had been so ardently desired ; but there was no opportunity for such an explanation, without its appearing forced and uncalled for.

As Ellen was to leave Wilford-house in a few days, she called, during the intervening time, to take leave of the families she was acquainted with in the neighbourhood.

At Mrs. Sidney's, it was noticed that Mr. Mortimer appeared to be very attentive to Miss Ponsonby, and from their characters suiting so well, it was very likely to be a match. On Ellen's coming to Sherbridge-park, she found Henry there; and she remarked that he appeared to be quite at home. She fancied, however, that he heard of her intended departure with regret; but Ellen, considering him now, as engaged to another, endeavoured to combat her feelings, and affected to be in good spirits, while in reality she was struggling with a concealed disappointment. She could not sufficiently condemn her own folly, and left Wilford-house under the conviction, that Henry had bestowed his affections on Octavia Ponsonby.

Mrs. Worthington had decided on spending some time at Southampton; and

a short time after Ellen's arrival in town, they proceeded thither. Previously to their setting out, Lady Lewiston called on them ; and, hearing that Ellen had been in the neighbourhood of Sherbridge-park, she spoke in very high terms of the Ponsonby family. Lord Kingsbury, she said, was a man of distinguished talents ; and she understood that Octavia Ponsonby was engaged to a gentleman of great respectability and fortune.

She did not mention his name ; indeed she did not know it ; but Ellen felt too well enabled to supply the deficiency to inquire.

After her arrival at Southampton, Mrs. Worthington took up a newspaper in a library, and, casting her eye over it, she presently observed to Ellen, that Miss Ponsonby's marriage was announced.

Ellen was prevented from making any remark, by some ladies coming to speak to her, and they quitted the library together; she had no opportunity of examining the paper herself, and her conscious feelings forbade direct inquiry.

Southampton was a new scene to Mrs. Worthington and her daughter. The weather was remarkably fine; and, having met with several of their acquaintance, frequent parties were made to enjoy the delightful excursions in the neighbourhood; and the attractions of the Isle of Wight induced them to make a week's tour round the island.

On their return to Southampton, several new visitants appeared in the arrival-book, and Ellen observed among the rest the name of Mr. Mortimer. At first it did not occur to her that it could be any other per-

son than Henry ; but, on a moment's consideration, this appeared to be very improbable.

On returning home, Ellen perceived Henry at some distance. It was evident they must meet ; and the uncertainty she was in respecting his marriage, very much perplexed her. In a few minutes the trial came. Henry approached them : he experienced a more cordial reception from Mrs. Worthington, than at their last interview : she began expatiating on the beauties of the place, which considerably relieved Ellen from the embarrassment she felt.

Ellen then inquired how long he had left Elmwood, and hoped all his friends in Berkshire were well.

“ They are all vastly well ; I only left

them last Friday ; you heard of the gay wedding we had, no doubt."

" Yes ; it was in the papers ; but I've heard no particulars."

Henry then mentioned, that after Ellen had left Wilford-house, Mr. De Grey arrived at Sherbridge-park to receive the hand of Octavia Ponsonby, to whom he had been long engaged. " I found him a most pleasant gentlemanly man," continued Henry, " and every way deserving of so charming a woman."

Henry proceeded to speak of the tour Mr. and Mrs. De Grey were to make, and of the festivities that had taken place at Sherbridge-park ; but after the satisfactory intelligence, that Henry was not the husband of Octavia, all further particulars were lost on Ellen, who was amus-

ing herself with tracing the imaginary grounds which had given rise to her fears.

CHAP. XVII.

HENRY still cherished a romantic affection for Ellen Worthington. His visit to Southampton was in consequence of hearing she was there ; and the favourable reception he met with, once more revived his hopes. The amusements of a watering-place afforded him frequent interviews with her, and gave him ample opportunities of satisfying himself that his attentions were not unacceptable. No obstacle presented itself to the union ; and their nuptials took place a short time after the marriage of George and Maria.

Little remains to be said of the other personages who have appeared in these pages. Mrs. Arthur Bolingbroke, after brooding over her lost consequence with unavailing discontent, consented at length to join the little parties which were formed at Ashington ; but this limited view of society was worse than total retirement. She sighed for the gaieties of fashionable life ; and an opportunity soon offered of again establishing herself in affluence.

Mr. Morley, a widower, possessed of a large fortune, who had lately settled in the neighbourhood, was introduced to Mrs. Arthur Bolingbroke ; and, captivated by her beauty, he made her an offer of his hand. Mr. Morley had passed his fiftieth year, but was still a fine looking man ; and his proposals held out too many advantages not to be accepted.

Immediately after the marriage cere-

mony, Mr. Morley and his bride set off for Brighton, where his fortune enabled them to support a handsome establishment; and had his lady conducted herself with propriety, her former reprehensible behaviour might have been in some degree overlooked. But the levity of Mrs. Morley knew no check; her vanity was flattered by the attentions paid her by men of fashion; she took no pains to silence the insinuations to which her conduct gave rise; and a more particular intimacy having commenced between her and Sir Charles Fleming, reports very unfavourable to her character at length became general.

It was now recollected, that even in Mr. Bolingbroke's lifetime, she had not been quite correct in her deportment; and that Mr. Bolingbroke had lost his life in a duel, occasioned by her indiscretion.

These reports at length reached Mr. Morley's ear, and called forth his remonstrances: his lady was very indignant; high words followed, and they parted in no very amicable mood; he insisting she should never see Sir Charles again, and she declaring she would see whom she pleased.

For a short time, Mrs. Morley was more guarded in her manners, but her former improprieties were soon repeated: Mr. Morley was exasperated; and though nothing appeared to criminate her, yet the disagreements between them were carried to so great a length, that a separate maintenance was the result.

Mrs. Morley removed to Bath, where she had several acquaintance who were more inclined to consider her ill treated, than to impute any blame to her.

Sir Charles Fleming made his appearance at Bath ; the intimacy between them was renewed ; reports injurious to her character were again circulated, and were now, without hesitation received as facts. All that had been known of her,—all that had been asserted,—was repeated, and believed ; and she now began to find herself shunned even by those whose conduct was no less reprehensible than her own, who fearing to incur suspicions against themselves by being on an intimate footing with a person of doubtful character, coolly returned her bow, and in a pointed manner declined her invitations. Even Sir Charles, treated her in a manner bordering on indifference ; there was a sort of authority in his behaviour, that alarmed her pride : and an altercation having taken place between them, she had the mortification of seeing herself alluded to in the public papers, which stated that a misunderstanding having taken place between a

certain Baronet and the beautiful Mrs. M.....y, the former had quitted the field.

After this, Mrs. Morley determined on living more circumspect: she assumed a reserve in her manners, and was now seldom seen in public. She had still a few friends inclined to countenance her, and to inveigh against the malignity of the world.

Change of seasons brought a change of company; and by degrees Mrs. Morley extended her visiting list; but she was received with caution: notwithstanding her assumed decorum, she feels that a barrier exists between her and the more respectable part of society: and though in company, she affects a cheerful deportment, alone she is one of the most miserable of human beings; and conscious that she can only support a place in society by the semblance of virtue, she

cannot stifle self-contempt. She sometimes sighs for the insipid life she led at Ashington; but the vanities of the world have still too great a hold on her affections, and she continues living in Bath, keeping up an acquaintance with persons who are indifferent about appearances, but visited by no lady of truly respectable character. Of this she is fully aware, and internally feels a corroding anguish of mind, the natural consequence of a departure from virtue, when accompanied by a sense of unworthiness, but without the resolution to retrieve the past, by a life of penitence and humiliation.

Mrs. Fairford's family has rapidly increased; so that her maternal cares have never yet permitted her to enjoy that life for which she married Captain Fairford. Mr. Meredith has been dead about a year, and his property proving very inconsiderable, all hopes of further pecuniary assist-

ance from that quarter are at an end: Fairford's uncle too has disappointed the expectations of all his nephews and nieces by marrying his house-keeper, who lately presented him with a son and heir.

The prospects of Captain and Mrs. Fairford, no longer viewed through the bright perspective of imagination, faded into the plain matter of fact circumstances of an officer and his wife, with an increasing family, and an income scarcely double the amount of his pay: their difficulties were every day more embarrassing, and Fairford's temper, ever impatient and selfish, became soured and morose. In company he still maintained the character of a pleasant companionable fellow; indeed he was always a man who could make himself vastly agreeable *when he thought proper*; and whenever good dinners were to be had, nothing certainly could be more *proper* than to pay for them.

with his very best behaviour ; but as a certain portion of ill temper must have its vent, he reserved that for his fire-side, and indulged his poor wife, on his return from a sumptuous entertainment, with an ungracious comparison between the style of life he was obliged to lead, and that of Captain Aylmer who had married a fortune, and "as pretty a woman as was ever seen." He then enumerated all the luxuries to which he had been accustomed, and seemed to give himself the greatest merit for being able to exist without them : he never admitted into the account the privations which his wife endured : he never sympathized with the anxieties her children occasioned her : he never noticed the fatigue she went through, unless it was to remark how ill she looked, and how much she neglected her appearance : he took no share in amusing the children, and if they were noisy he quitted the house.

Fortunately for Mrs. Fairford, through the interest of a relation, a civil appointment was procured for her husband, in the north of England, which considerably ameliorated their circumstances; but Fairford deprecated the situation; undervaluing its advantages, and too proud to acknowledge that they were obtained through his wife's family, he cavilled at every inconvenience attending his removal, and declared it worse than banishment; entirely overlooking the distress it occasioned his wife to be separated from her connexions: *he* could find opportunities of visiting his friends; but narrow circumstances, and a numerous family, precluded all idea of *her* leaving home. Her sister she has not seen for several years; she kept up a correspondence with her for some time after her marriage, but as each of them had experienced considerable mortification and disappointment, resulting from the unsuitable connexions they had formed, their letters

gradually became less confidential, less frequent, and soon after Mrs. Fairford had settled at ——, all regular correspondence had ceased: for it generally happens, even between very near relations, when removed to a considerable distance from each other, that if they are in circumstances, the communication of which can afford no pleasure, correspondence becomes irksome, and is at length discontinued by mutual though tacit consent; particularly if the unpleasant situations in which they find themselves placed, are imputable to their own imprudence, or in any manner attended with self-accusation.

Elizabeth, it must be owned, has found the introduction into the Ponsonby family, attended by none of the pleasures, which she had attached to high life. 'Tis true, while she resided with them, her pride felt a considerable gratification, in moving

in so elevated a sphere; but the mere luxuries attached to it, soon became so familiar, that they passed unheeded; and the society she was in, was irksome to her feelings: she endeavoured to recall the pleasing ideal picture, which her fancy had sketched, and to compare it with the scenes actually present: there was nothing she could reasonably complain of; yet it was either not the life she had anticipated, or, ah fatal truth! it was not the life for which she was fitted.

It more frequently happens that we miss the substance while we obtain the shadow; but Elizabeth had gained more than she had promised herself: she had only looked forwards to an elegant house, fashionable acquaintance, routine of gaieties, and all the fascinations of *haut ton*: she had not given that class of society, on which she was so anxious to be engrafted, credit for any rational social happiness; it had made

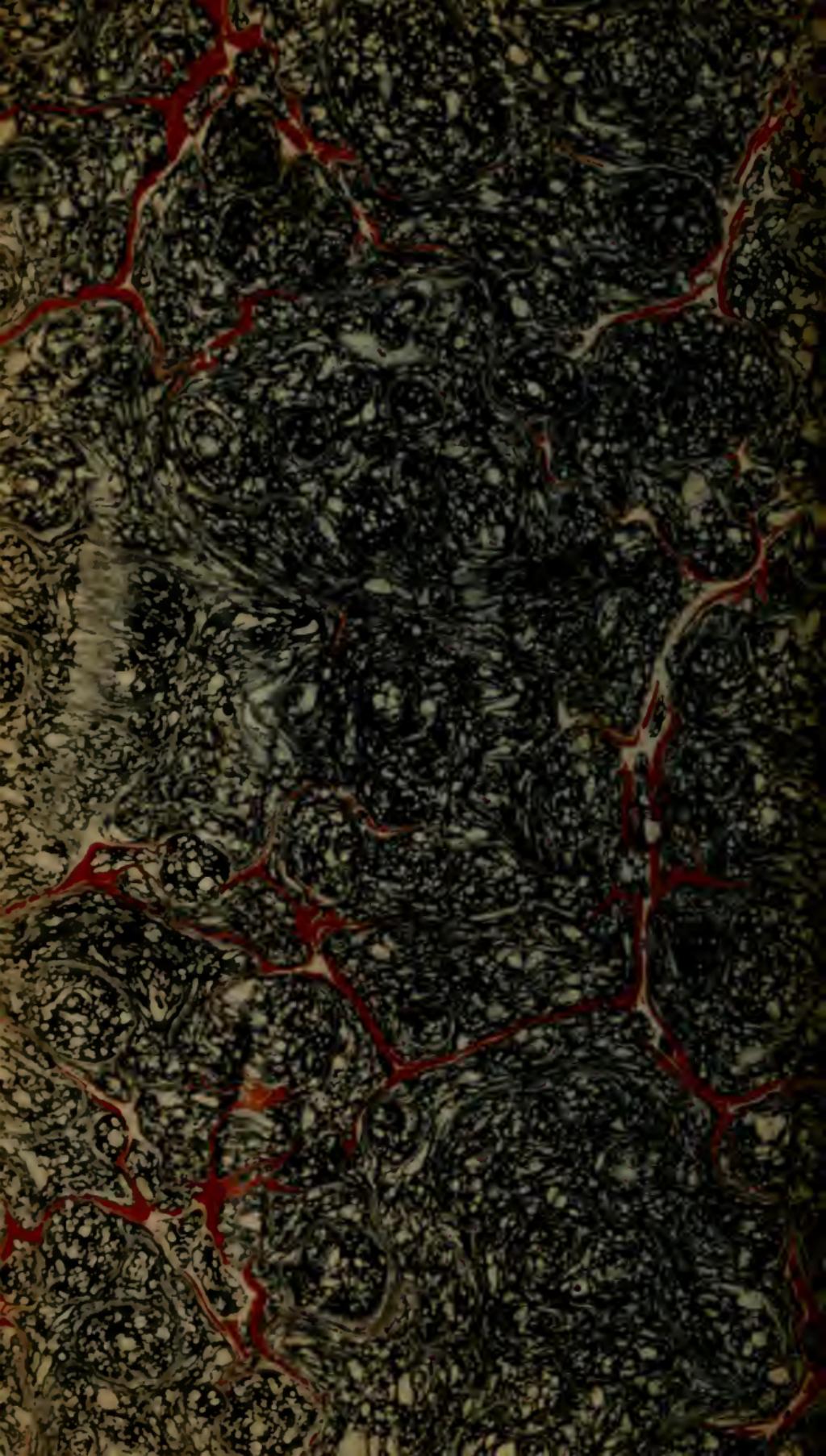
no part of her calculations that any other endowments were necessary to form a woman of high rank, than such as she considered herself fully possessed of. The high-bred manners of Mrs. Ponsonby; the cultivated minds of her daughters, and the elegant and rational refinement in all their pursuits, she had not been prepared for.

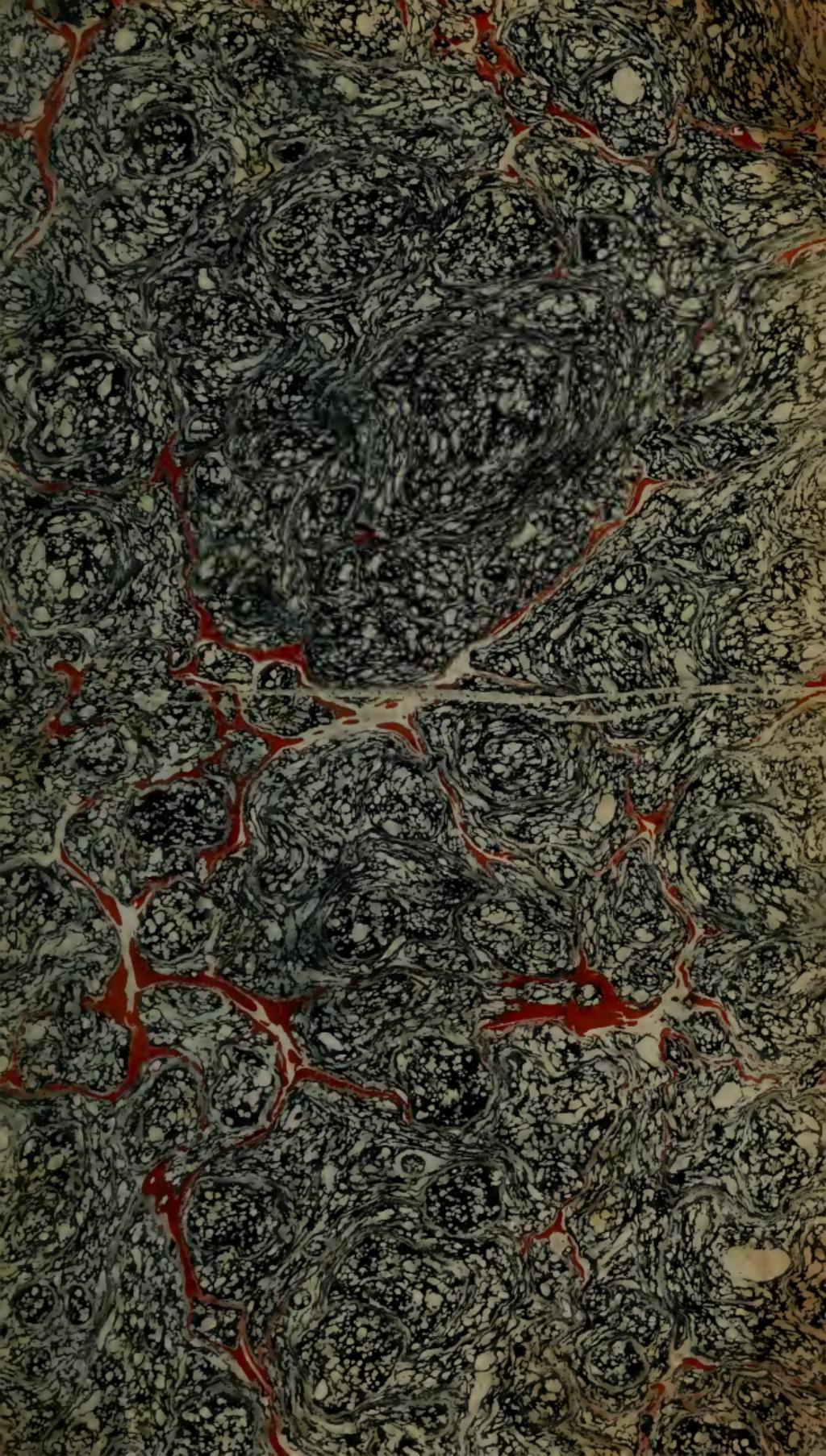
The Ponsonby family visit none but the most respectable people, and the dissipations of fashionable life entered into none of their amusements; so that instead of shining like a brilliant meteor, as she fondly expected, she found herself reduced to a mere by-stander; and most happy was she, when she quitted the magnificent mansion at Woodsbourne, for the retired dwelling in London, which Frederick took, when his profession, to which he was now become much attached, required his constant residence in town.

George Bolingbroke experienced the greatest domestic felicity in the society of his amiable wife, who soon after their marriage, received a most gratifying mark of her husband's affection, by his settling a liberal independence on her father, whose re-established health permitted him to witness their happiness.

'The equanimity which had supported Maria in the various scenes she had encountered, gave a dignity to her manners, which demanded universal respect; while the goodness of her heart secured her a circle of valued friends.

THE END.





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